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THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA

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INTRODUCTION

The swadeshi movement accordingly consisted, economically, of using goods produced in the country in preference to those imported from abroad, and politically of making the administration as far as possible India. According to Gopal Krishna Gokhale “one of the most gratifying signs of the present times is the rapid growth of the swadeshi sentiment all over the country during the last two years (1907) that swadeshimism at its highest is not merely an industrial movement, but that it affects the whole life of the nation – that swadeshimism at its highest is a deep, passionate, fervent, all-embracing love of the motherland, and that this love seeks to show itself, not in one sphere of activity only but in all; it invades the whole man, and it will not rest until it has raised the whole man. Tilak, leader of the extremists, stressed in his speech at the Congress that the basic goal of the swadeshi programme, the boycott and national education, the attainment of swaraj or independence. In fact, swadeshimism is a large term which includes politics and to be a true swadeshi one must look on all times – whether political or industrial or economical – which converge our people towards the status of a civilized nation.

According to G. Subrahmanya Iyer “The swadeshi movement, while directly striving for liberation from industrial dependence, recognizes it only as a means to a great national end, to an all comprehensive programme of reform and reconstruction in the modern life of the people of India. Need we say that the „Swadeshi“ movement has come to say and grow from place to place and dimension to dimension? Its full force and significance are evident in the wonderful progress it has made, not in Bengal alone, nor in any single province, but throughout the country, bringing into play unsuspected fresh energies and opening up fresh prospects of national expansion and prosperity. The tide is not of the same force or height everywhere; but its sweep touches the extremities as well the heart of the nation”.

SWADESHI IN ACTION

When Bengal started the agitation, it was taken up by other regions throughout India. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great Bengali novelist, took up the theme and wrote a novel called “Anandamath”, which has been translated into Kannada also. He had composed the famous national song “BandeMataram” which gave a call to the sannyasins to serve the motherland and lay down their lives, if need be. The Anti-partition movement, or the swadeshi movement as it came to be called, was remarkable, in many respects and most of all in the active programme which is placed before the nation. The programme was fourfold: a) Boycott of foreign, especially of British goods; b) The exclusive use of swadeshi goods and the promotion of indigenous industries; c) National education as different from the soul less education which was meant only to manufacture intelligent clerks and finally; d) Demand for swaraj or self-rule on the same pattern as England itself. This programme was placed before sessions of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1906. It was presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of India. By that time the names of Lokamanya Tilak, BabuAurovindo Ghose, LalaLajpatarai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendranath Bannerji and other had already become household words throughout India as leaders of new militant nationalism which would not rest till swaraj was won.¹ Karnataka was readily responded to the call of swadeshi and boycott, now chiefly influenced by the personality of Lokamanya BalGangadar Tilak. In 1905-1906 Tilak toured the North Karnataka area. His stirring speeches and writings in Kesari and Maratha had their impact on the state as elsewhere in the Deccan. His fearless articles in their original and in their Kannada translations were avidly read by the people.

The gist of his message was saving the country from the alien bureaucracy and reviving its ancient glory is possible only through Swaraj or self-Government; swaraj can be achieved only through the boycott of foreign goods and dissemination of swadeshi; the importance of boycott and swadeshi must be clearly understood by the people of all classes; this understanding can come only through a system of national education not the English education, which only prepare young men to become obsequious clerks and petty officials, but an education which imparted true knowledge of the rich Indian heritage and infused an intense love of the motherland and an unfaltering determination to revive the splendour and glory of the past. The ripple of the anti-partition movement which is considered as the peak of success in course of the Indian nationalism touched the shores of Karnataka too. GangadharRao Deshpande, Alur Venkatrao, Hardekar Manjappa, SrinivasRao Kaujalgi, were the ardent admirers and close associates of Lokamanya Tilak, were attending the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress since 1904.

Karnataka Vritta from Dharwar reported on 18.8.1908 “the people they are busy in collecting subscriptions to erect a memorial in honour of Mr. LokamanyaTilak and that the memory will take the form of a building to be known as the „Tilak math“ with the statute of Tilak in it. A well-known merchant named Ramdas is willing to make a free grant of a piece of land to serve as a site for the proposed building.The “Tilak math” has been established at Bagalkot to carry out the principles advocated by Mr. Tilak, and that Messers, Mudvedker, Pitre, Lingayya of Dharwar and Mr. SrinivasRaoKaujalgi of Bijapur visited the math

during the Ganapati Festival and delivered their political addresses. The princely State of Mysore was not stay back in Swadeshi movement, one of the ardent devotees of Tilak, Hardekar Manjappa started the paper "Dhanurdhari" in 1906, at Davanagere. He read the speeches and articles of the luminous personalities of the Trio – Lal, Bal, Pal with great enthusiasm, and without fail he had them published in his paper "Dhanurdhari" through his "Sachidananda" press.² When the government arrested and sentenced Shivaram Mahadeva Paranj, the publisher of the "Kala", Manjappa felt very grieved. Soon after, Lokamanya Tilak was arrested. When the news of his being sentenced to six years' imprisonment reached Manjappa at 12 noon, he went off to the backyard, and wept loudly. He didn't take lunch that noon. He was almost sure that Tilak would not come back alive out of this imprisonment, and he was greatly devoted to him. The tremendous political activities that were taking place in British India had their impact on the native Indian states. At that time, V.P. Madhavarao was the Diwan of Mysore. Mysore had its press Act, which turned out to be stiffer than the one in British India. While explaining in a speech the necessity for such a law, the Diwan mentioned obliquely that it was aimed at one paper in particular. Some thought this meant "Dhanurdhari", and within a few days, this surmise proved to be true. A gentleman by name H. Chennakeshava Iyengar, of Madras, wrote a satirical piece on the congress, and got it published in the monthly "Vikata Pratapa" of Bangalore. In it he compared the congress to the donkey of the Aesop fable, and made Surendranath Banerjee the person who wants about selling it. After reading this article Hardekar Manjappa grieved.³ He wrote a sharp counter-attack on that article in the "Dhanurdhari". After seeing this article Shri Chennakeshava Iyengar telegraphically appealed to Manjappa to stop his attacks. This further provoked him; Manjappa went to the extent of publishing the text of Iyengar's telegram itself in the following issue. Thereupon the gentleman in question sent to Manjappa a long letter in which he explained that his intention had not to abuse the National Congress, and that this way of teaching a lesson through ridicule was an established practice in English. But among the Hindus the donkey is considered a particularly ridiculous and low creature. Thus Manjappa's argument was that it would have been more appropriate to have the congress compared to a horse. Any way Manjappa didn't change his view, and most of his paper readers seemed to agree with him. This controversy stimulated the paper, and everybody began to admire his pluck. The Swadeshi movement was conducted by the then Diwan of Mysore, Sir Mirza Ismail. Hence, an ardent believer of Swadeshi principle, M.N. Krishna Rao extended some supplementary schemes of Swadeshi movement. Krishna Rao established the centre of Khadi spinning and weaving at Badanal, and later he got the ascent of Mirza Ismail. An article of Ishwar Dutt reflects the point of Mirza Ismail had his faith in Swadeshi movement. According to Ishwar Dutt, "Mirza Ismail, even as an Indian, originally he is a Mysurian as Loyd George is the man of Wales". Once, Mirza Ismail, he broadcasted and said that, "We have the great pride regarding the goods which are; produced in our industries. Even though it has the danger of regional thought I say, rather than, the ideals we put in front of the Mysurians, they will wash their hands from the Mysore Sandal Soap, smear their bathen face from Mysore towels, wear the Mysore silk, ride the Mysore horses, drink the Mysore coffee."⁴

SWADESHI ORGANISATION

The sudden emergence of the Samitis or „national volunteer“ movement was one of the major achievements of the Swadeshi age. Most samitis were quite open bodies engaged in a variety of activities, physical and moral training of members, social work during famines, epidemics or religious festivals, preaching the swadeshi message through multifarious forms, organising crafts, schools, arbitration courts and village societies, and implementing the techniques of passive resistance. A police report of June 1907 gave an estimate of 84885 volunteers for east Bengal, Bakargunj and Dacca topped the list with more than 2600 each. As in other things, there was a lot of variety within the Samiti movement. Thus the Calcutta-based Anti-circular society stood out to its secularism.⁵ The „Barisal SwadeshiBandhav“ did acquire something like a genuine mass base – 175 village branches were reported in 1909 and through sustained humanitarian work (as during a near famine in 1906) its leader AshwinikumarDutt acquired remarkable popularity among the peasants of his district, Muslims as well as Hindus.

ORGANISATION ON NATIONAL FESTIVALS

In Karnataka as in Bengal and Maharashtra there were numerous organisations, Samitis and Sabhas established in every nook and corner of the State, on the eve of the new movement. Far more important was the inauguration of the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals by Tilak which may be said to be an important landmark in the history of the Swadeshi movement. Tilak's object undoubtedly was to utilize the religious instincts and historical traditions for the purpose of engendering, patriotism and national spirit among the people. He also hoped that these festivals, organized on a popular basis, would bring together the masses and the classes, a much desired contact, the importance of which the congress never realized.

The Ganapati festival was an old religious institution, but Tilak transformed it into a national festival and gave it a political character by organizing lectures, processions, meals, and singing parties. These were calculated to inculcate in the people a sturdy manhood, organized discipline and love of their country. Besides, it offered a common platform to the masses and classes and helped considerably in fostering national sentiment and promoting political education among large sections of people who kept aloof from organisations of a distinctive political character such as the Congress or conferences. The festival, as reorganised by Tilak in 1893, appealed instinctively to all classes of people and spread rapidly all over Karnataka from Maharashtra. With the thick influence of Tilak's national festivals, GangadharRao and GovindraoYalgi started organizing Shivajiutsav in Belgaum. N.S.Hardikar was an ardent devotee of Tilak, organised Ganesh utsava, Shivajiutsava, Swadeshi sports, Vyayamasalas, Vachanalayas and Prachara Sabha for sale of Swadeshi articles in Hubli and surrounding areas like Kalghatagi. Tilak was attending the function of public Ganapati festival organised at Belgaum in 1906, following the example of Pune and other places.⁶

A committee was framed to welcome Tilak with VishnupantNatu as Chairman and SripadraoChatre and DattopantBelvi, two advocates as members and GangadharRao as the Secretary. Tilak “Came, saw and conquered” men to the national cause by addressing many meetings in Belgaum and its suburbs like Anigol, Shahpur, Hudali, Pachchapur, etc. During his three-day visit with Shivarampant Paranjape visited GurlaHosur via Dharwad, and addressed public meetings in many places including Karikatti, Bailhongal, Hosur, Hooli and Murgod, while Krishnarao Mudvidkar of Dharwad translated Tilak’s speeches into Kannada. Thousands attended the meetings and these through Tilak sowed the first seeds of nationalism in that area. AlurVenkatrao when who was in fifteen, he entered the high school at Dharwad. During these days the performance of the Ganesh festival was rather popular in Maharashtra and northern part of Karnataka.⁷

In such condition the Swadeshi movement become a boon for them. It gave a new birth to weavers who were in mortalised state. „Swadeshi store“ became local market for their woven clothes. Muttur Mahabaleshwarappa of Kittur was being a small trader by heredity; he worked overnight for the success of Swadeshi movement by sacrificing all his belongings. He made an oath for not to sell the foreign cloth. He traded with mere handloom clothes. Later in 1916, he organised a “Cooperative Society” and rendered service for long years as founding Chairman. Muttur made an effort to cast the technical knowledge to the skilled weavers by the technicians. He sent Mr. K.H.Kabbur to Bombay to learn the art of dying and trained the weavers, after returning back to Kittur. Muttur propagated the readymade models of the cloth designs through sending them to “SwadeshiBhandar and Swadeshi Exhibition”, in other provinces. It was clear indication that, the Swadeshi made clothes of Kittur got the award certificate and silver medal from Lahore, Kashmir and Dharwad Industrial Exhibition respectively. The clothes of Kittur, not only in Northern India but also in South Africa sold very luxuriously. Obviously, it was only the result of effective Swadeshi movement in Karnataka.⁸

Glassware bangles was the another cottage work of Kittur. Muttur Mahabaleshwarappa encouraged the Glassware producers. With a result, Kittur bangles were demandfully marked in South India. Muttur Mahabaleshwarappa’s about 20 years of continuous and tired less effort in Swadeshi movement get him a award certificate from the Chairman of 39th Indian National Congress, - M.K.Gandhi which held at Belgaum in 1924. Muttur served to the cause of public in several ways. He opened a clinic “Sri Bharat VanaushadiSangrahalaya”, to serve free medicine to the poor. Nayikas of Nandagad, Kavyanand of Kittur, MutturMahabaleshwarappa, GiribhattNarasimhacharya, Gurubhatta Joshi, NarayanacharyaKanchi and others thoroughly toured every village in the Kittur region and disseminate the swadeshi goods with propagation. They gave lectures on self-reliance to the people through Swadeshi.⁹ And made clarification how the nation deteriorated with the use of foreign cloth, sugar, toddy, arrack etc. In other parts of Karnataka also there was a resurgence of the nationalist spirit and a growing conciousness that Indian freedom was indivisible. The people in princely State of Mysore were in a better position than those in other parts of Karnataka, for they had the benefits of benevolent rule under a prince whose first concern was the welfare of the people and who had liberalized the administration by introducing a measure of popular

representation in the Government. And fortunately enough, Mysore had a galaxy of competent and liberal-minded Dewans, who by their measures of popular welfare made the State one of the best-governed princely states in India. Still the people of Mysore, especially the educated and enlightened section, did not fail to be affected by the events that were happenings in British India, in spite of the efforts of the British Government, through the Resident, to check the spread of nationalist ideas in the state. Even at the turn of the Century, the efforts of the British to inculcate loyalty to and admiration for British rule by the introduction of text-books in history and civics like Marsden's History of India, Sinclair's „History of India“, Lee-warner's „Citizen of India“, and the celebration of Empire Day and Coronation Day when there were lectures on “The Blessings of British rule in India”, adnauseam, had the effect of antagonising even the students. The partition of Bengal and the growth of the Swadeshi and swaraj agitation had their echo in Mysore also, and newspapers spread the ideas of Congressmen among the masses. The Theosophical movement spread among the intelligentsia, and its leaders spoke to the people not only of the glories of the past, but also of the need for unity and self-government if those glories were to revive. The people of Mysore were awakened towards national problems and began to agitate for more powers for the Representative Assembly and a curtailment of the powers of the Diwan.¹⁰

The assumption by the Queen of England of the imperial title of Kaiser-i-Hind or Empress of India as the result of the Royal Title Act of 1876 introduced another ugly factor into the problem of the Indian states. The Act gave legal sanction to the autocracy of the rulers, who, so long as they kept on good terms with the viceroy, the Resident and his minions, could govern or misgovern their principalities with impunity. “They became titled minions of the viceroy, obsequious and sycophantic before the viceroy or his officers, and arrogant and oppressive towards their subjects”.¹¹ Sycophantry was developed into a fine art in the Indian States, whose people began to feel disgust when they saw their princess. Some of them descendants of a long time of powerful kings become “fawning republicans” before British officers and their wives. Though this state of affairs was almost non-existent in Mysore, the people of the state felt that, in the interests of the unity and political advancement of India, they must make their Government responsible to the people, retaining the prince if necessary as constitutional sovereign. The political problems of the States, though in some respects different from that in British India on account of the presence of the sovereign, was essentially the same as in other parts, since swaraj or self-rule was the objective of all parts of the country. The movement in Mysore was first organised by M.Venkatakrishnaiah who through his newspapers spread among the people a great awareness of the problems facing the country and showed the lines along which political agitation should proceed. Political leaders in Mysore were convinced that it was only when the people of the princely states advanced on parallel lines with the people of British India that the fight against foreign rule could succeed. Nationalists in the princely state were keenly alive to think fundamental factor of the struggle.¹²

CONCLUSION

True enough; the struggle in the states was for the elimination of the autocracy of the princes and the introduction of constitutional reforms divesting the ruler of autocratic powers. The example of England was there to follow; when once this was done, there would be a real democratic set-up all over the country, and the path of progress would become smooth and easy. Thus, though the people in the states fought mainly for wresting sovereign power from the hands of their princes, there was always in their minds the nature of the future democratic set-up of Independent India, and therefore the study of the struggle for constitutional government in the states cannot be taken up in isolation. The British Government was determined to keep the states away from the swelling current of national resurgence, and the ever-vigilant Residents tried their best to make the princes adopt stern measures against their own subjects. Flamboyant titles and rewards were dangled before their princes; they were offered protection against the forces of democratic insurrection; and they were left in peace to rule their subjects as they pleased so long as they followed the policy dictated by the viceroy. The Government knew that their hold on the country would perceptibly weaken if they allowed the people of the states to join forces with those in other parts of the country. At Karwar (Uttara Kannada), Krishnarao Haldipurkar a boy in teens, organised "Bala Bandu Samaj", an organization of teenagers like N.S. Hardikar's "AryaBalaSabha", to propagate Swadeshi in 1906-07 and soon the Government ordered the stopping its activities. But creative minded Krishnarao didn't sit quietly. He had collected contributions with a view to assist Aurobindo for his defence in the Alipur Bomb case. It was a stirring development in the district of Karwar regarding Swadeshi movement.

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