Appendix to Chapter-IX

It is relevant here to examine the views of some writers about the relation between Indian Nationalism, or a phase of it, namely, the Swadeshi Movement and the New Hindu Movement. Some have generally ignored the impact of the ideas of the New Hindu thinkers on the development of political consciousness in India. Some again have viewed them as positive obstacles to its development.

J. N. Farquhar considered the introduction of religious vocabulary, symbols and ideas into the nationalist movement prior to 1910 to be political tools and propaganda weapons used by unscrupulous politicians to inspire and inflame the masses. Valentine Chirol in his interpretation of the nationalist movement contended that it was the association of Hindu revivalist sentiment with political aspirations that generated the nationalist movement, and gave it a conservative or reactionary character. Coming nearer our own times, R. P. Dutt opines that two factors - (a) the insistence on orthodox religion and (b) the affirmation of the supposed spiritual superiority of ancient Hindu civilization to modern 'Western' civilization "inevitably retarded and weakened the real advance of the national movement and of political consciousness." Anil Seal again

1. Dutt, R.P. India To-day, Manisha, (Second Indian edition, 1970).
attempted to interpret Indian politics in terms of unevenness in Indian society and competition amongst the people guiding the politics of the time. Attempts have also been made to interpret nationalism as being no more than a realisation of selfish and narrow group interests. To him 'Extremism was less an ideology than a technique.'

It would be idle to answer all such criticisms author by author. We should concentrate on the points raised by R. P. Dutt and Anil Seal. It is however pertinent to point out that while Farquhar criticises the New Hindu Movement, on the score of its supposed potency to inflame the masses R. P. Dutt bases his indictment on its supposed incapacity to achieve that very end.

Anil Seal's book covers the period upto 1888; he has not studied the Swadeshi Movement. But by way of making some 'fresh approaches' to the history of Indian Nationalism after 1888, he indicates a line of argument which is relevant to our discussion. According to him, 'Extremism' was less an ideology than a technique.

We have shown in Chapter-IX that the doctrines of Swadeshi, Swaraj and National Education which formed the programme of the Extremists in the Swadeshi Movement can be largely traced to the writings and preachings of thinkers like Bankim, Vivekananda and Tagore. These three ideas formed an ideology by which a nation can be reconstructed; only boycott could be called a technique. Bankim's conception of 'Dharmarajya' surely supplied a model; Vivekananda's
call for 'raising the masses and women of India' showed the way for removing the real malady in Indian Society and Tagore's 'Swadeshi Swaraj' provided the framework to proceed on. These ideas exemplified a search for national identity and they countered the challenge of what they thought to be superficial Westernization of Indian life, thought and politics. These ideas derived from certain firm convictions. Even Anil Seal would agree that the Extremists had sown the seeds of the aim of complete national liberation and of determined struggle to achieve it.

R. P. Dutt's statement that "the insistence on orthodox religion as the heart of the national movement, and the proclamation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu civilization to modern 'Western' civilization (what modern psychologists would no doubt term a compensatory delusion), inevitably retarded and weakened the real advance of the national movement and of political consciousness."¹ is plainly contradictory to his own subsequent admission that the Swadeshi Movement "achieved" "the permanent advance .... in the stature of the national movement" which "was never lost."²

R. P. Dutt also states that from the Swadeshi "era dates the disastrous combination of political radi-

2. Ibid, p.331.
calism and social reaction in India. He leaves little room for doubt that by "social reaction" he means the particular New Hindu attitude to contemporary social reformers. Dutt does not mention Bankim and Vivekananda by name, but bitterly criticises Tilak. He says, "The alliance of radical nationalism with the most reactionary forces of Orthodox Hinduism was signified signalised by Tilak when he opened his campaign in 1890 with a fight against the Age of Consent Bill, which sought to raise the age of consummation of marriage for girls from ten years to twelve years."

He did not take note of the fact that the Bill was a direct outcome of the campaign launched by Malabari, the Parsi, who represented the Hindus as a race of rapists and child-molesters. He ought to have noted the fact that Tilak never opposed the measure as such but wanted to get it accepted by Hindu society by propaganda and spread of education. He has concealed the fact that Tilak's campaign had the effect of greatly promoting the nationalist cause. It is by such omissions that R.P. Dutt has supported the thesis that the Swadeshi Movement (and a fortiori the New Hindu Movement) was associated with social reaction.

Another point raised by R. P. Dutt is concerned with the supposed responsibility of the Swadeshi Movement for alienating Muslim opinion. He asserts roundly that the Swadeshi "emphasises on Hinduism must bear a share of the responsibility for the alienation of Muslim opinion from the national movement." He has avoided mentioning the

1. Ibid., p.325.
2. Ibid., p.326.
fact that Muslim separatism as a fact of modern Indian history was considerably prior to the Swadeshi Movement and dates from about the time of the Wahhabi Movement. He has ignored the fact that this separatism was raised to the status of an ideology since the days of the Aligarh Movement.

The Swadeshi Movement was a latter-day phenomenon and the objection raised against it by a large section of Muslims proves little beyond the fact that they were already separatists. No doubt, it can be argued that the volume of separatist opinion amongst Muslims was swelled by the Swadeshi 'emphasis on Hinduism.' However, it has yet to be demonstrated that Muslims who had hitherto been staunch 'nationalists' suddenly defected after the Swadeshi Movement to the camp of 'separatists.'

This is not to suggest that the cults of Kali and Ganapati (both Hindu deities) which certainly played a role, though a very minor one, in the Swadeshi Movement, were the sort of things with which any Muslim could honestly associate. But these cults were never directed against the Muslims. Most critics who find fault with the Swadeshi Movement on the score of these cults conveniently forget that a national movement in a country like India with so many religious sects, so many local 'nationalities' and so many linguistic 'nationalities' has always sought to harness some of the sectarian expressions to the nationalist cause. The classic example of this was of course the Khilafat Agitation. It is notable that R.P. Dutt seldom raises the cry of "reaction" in dealing
with that agitation\(^1\) and praises the militant Moplah Rebellion, which was evidently greatly influenced by the Khilafat Movement, ignoring the fact that 90% victims of that militancy were Hindus, which shows that it had also serious communal implications.

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\(^1\) Ibid. p. 140 and passim.