OPPOSITION TO THE BRITISH RULE AND THE ROLE OF SWADESHI MAINLY FROM THE PERIOD OF 1885 - 1905

The Congress was formed in 1885 and for twenty years i.e. till, it played a very important part in awakening the feelings of Swadeshi, inculcating the feelings of nationalist among the people.

The Congressmen, during this period, did not hold extreme views of Purna Swaraj, hence they are known as moderate Congressmen. They simply wanted more reforms in administration and more participation by the Indians in government.

So, we shall research the opposition to the British rule, by the moderate congressmen during these twenty years from 1885-1905. Opposition to the British rule and the role of Swadeshi mainly from the period of 1885-1905.

The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay under the presidency of W.C. Bannerjee. The meeting created much stir, and Bombay representative of the Times wrote on it, and remarked “for the first time perhaps since the world began, India as a nation met together”.

The congress then discussed and passed nine resolutions. The more important of these were in the forms of demands to the government of India for the-

1. S.N. Gupta- History of the Nationalist Movement Pg.34
2. Annie Besant-India a Nation Pg.68
1. Appointment of Royal Commission Inquiry into the working in Indian administration.

2. Abolition of Indian Council (of the Secretary of State)


4. Admission of elected members in the legislative councils and discussion of budgets and the creation of a standing committee.

5. Reduction of military expenditure.

6. Introduction of simultaneous Public Service Examination in England and India and the raising of the age of candidates.

The speeches were characterised by moderation and extreme effusions of Loyalty to the British power.

In spite of the moderation and loyalty of the congress, the English public opinion looked upon the emergency of the congress as a political danger to the British power, in India.

The main result of the first session of the congress was that it quickened the political consciousness of the people. The resolutions passed by it were widely circulated to the local political associations.³

Other administrative demands included separation of judiciary, extension of trial by Jury repeal of Arms Act, higher jobs in the army for Indians, and the raising of an Indian volunteer force—demands, which evidently combined pleas for social equality, with a concern for Civil rights.

³ R.C. Majumdar-History of freedom movement Pgs. 352-354
What made the moderate congress increasingly a target of criticism were not so much its objectives as its method and style of functioning.

The early congress concentrated on building up through these petitions, speeches, and articles a fool proof logical case, which was aimed at convincing the liberal minded public opinion of Britain and not the bureaucrats of British India. 4

The Indian national congress passed a number of resolutions each year, demanding reform in administration and redress of grievances but neither the government of India not the British cabinet paid any heed to them.

Practical effect to the second plan namely to instruct the great English nation was given before Madras session. An appeal was made for the first time to the masses to join the congress, by contributing to the congress fund.

In pursuance of the propaganda of mass movement, Hume appealed for funds to all classes of Indian Community, calling meetings, distributing pamphlets.

These pamphlets contained bitter attacks against government.

The mass movement irritated the officials and they not only desired to suppress the congress but also recommended that the Hume be deported.

4. Sumit Sardar-Modern India 1885-1947 Pgs. 90, 91
The congress resolved to send a deputation to England to place before the British public its views about political reforms in India.

The policy of appealing to the common people to rally behind the congress was abandoned in favour of the other proposal of Hume namely approach the great English nation to do justice to India. The Indian congress adopted this as a sacred creed for the next quarter of a century. 5

The passing of the Indians Councils act of 1892, heartened the congress. Though the reforms fell for short of the congress demands, still the act was hailed as the first victory of the constitutional agitation started by the congress.

Henceforth the congress marched forward from year to year with courage and hope for ultimate success. It's method of agitation came to be gradually recognised as a potent force in the public life of India. 6

5. R.C. Majumdar-History of freedom movement Pgs. 356-358
AN ECONOMIC CRITIQUE OF COLONIALISM

The moderate leaders of the congress, were the first in the 19th century to develop an economic critique of colonialism. This critique was perhaps the most important contribution to the development of the national movement in India. The themes built around it formed the very basis of the nationalist agitation through lectures, newspapers, dramas, songs etc. This is what demarcates the post 1870 generation of Indian intellectuals from their predecessors. In the economic realm, Britain the emerging giant of the world, was expected to develop India's productive forces, through the introduction of modern science and technology. It is not that the early, Indian nationalists were not aware of the political, psychological and economic disabilities of foreign domination, but they still supported colonial rule, as they expected it to rebuild India.

These moderate nationalists noticed that the country was overall regressing and under developing. These men initiated and carried out the economic analysis of British rule during the years 1870 – 1905.

Dadabhai Naroji, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade and R.C. Dutt along with other nationalists raised, basic questions regarding the nature and purpose of the British rule. They concluded that the main obstacle to India's economic development was colonialism.

The essence of the 19th century colonialism, in the transformation of India into a supplier of foods stuffs and raw materials, a market for the metropolitan manufactures and a field for the investment of British Capital.

1. Bipin Chandra-India's struggle for freedom Pg. 91
2. Suniit Sarkar-Modern India, Pg. 86, 1885-1905
The nationalist economic agitation started with the assertion that Indians were poor and were growing poorer every day. Dadabhai Naroji made poverty his special subject and spent his entire life, awakening the Indians and British public to the continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country.

The early nationalist saw this poverty as man made and therefore capable of being explained and removed. In the course of their search, for the causes of India’s poverty, the nationalist underlined factors and forces, which had been brought into play by the colonial rulers and colonial structure.³

The nationalist critique directly related the growing poverty of India to certain deliberate British policies, particularly to the drain of wealth.⁴ The word Drain cannot that the burden of the white men on India, tends to exhaust her resources⁵ This drain of wealth, occurred through an artificial export surplus, destruction of handicrafts followed by hindrances to modern Indian Industry and excessive land revenue burden.

The remedies repeatedly suggested were a reversal of these policies and all out Indian efforts at Industrial development.

Explaining the causes of poverty in India Annie Besant has said “The great drain on India of money raised as revenue from her people and sent out of the country to maintain India’s office, to pat pensions to English officials, to pay interest on capital expended on railways, largely, controlled from London. This drain reduces India to perpetual poverty,

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3. B.C. Pal-India’s struggle for freedom Pg. 93
4. Sumit Sarkar-Modern India Pg. 86, 1885-1905
5. Annie Besant—“India a Nation”, Pg. 34
recurring famines and the huge indebtedness of her agricultural population, now amounting to 500 crores of rupees. To this may be added the cost of famines and the cost of foreign wars.”

The crushing and the inelastic taxation on the cultivators of soil was the direct cause of indebtedness and famines.

The Rev. Mr. Sutherland in the New England magazine Boston Sept. 1900 writing the causes of Indian famines says they are not due to the failures of rains, not due to over population but to the extreme, the object, the awful poverty of the Indian people and this is due to enormous foreign tribute, the cost of “the most expensive government in the world, the army, the foreign wars”. 6

The early nationalists accepted with remarkable unanimity the complete economic transformation of the country on the basis of modern technology and capitalist enterprise was the primary goal of all their economic policies.

Modern Industry was seen as a major force, which could help unite the diverse people of India into a single national entity.

At the same time, the early nationalists were clear on one question. However great the need of India, for industrialisation, it had to be based on Indian capital, and not foreign capital.

6. Annie Beasnt-“India a Nation”, Pg. 34,36
ATTITUDE TO FOREIGN CAPITAL

The early nationalist saw foreign capital as an evil, which did not develop a country, but exploited and impoverished it. As Dadabhai Naroji popularly put it, foreign capital represented the 'despoliation' and 'exploitation' of Indian resources.

They further agreed that instead of encouraging and augmenting Indian capital, foreign capital replaced and suppressed it and led to the drain of capital from India and further strengthened the British hold over the Indian economy.

B.C.Pal summed up the nationalist view point in 1901 as follows:-

"The introduction of foreign capital for working out natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, is in fact the greatest of hindrance to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people as it is an economic danger."

According to early nationalists the genuine economic development was possible, only if Indian capital itself initiated and developed the process of industrialisation.

Foreign capital inevitably led to its political subjugation.

Foreign capital investment created vested interests, which demanded security for investors and therefore perpetuated foreign rule.  

7. India's Struggle for Independence by Bipin Chandra Pgs. 91-100
One of the main economic questions that arose in connection with the accelerated growth of Indian capitalism and the development of the swadeshi movement was the attitude to be taken to foreign capital.

The varied views that prevailed on the question reflected the differences between the diverse groups of the Indian bourgeoisie and other sections of the Indian society.

R.C. Dutt, President of Indian National Congress in 1905, held that the use of foreign capital was unquestionably beneficial. He defined the aim of swadeshi as "by very lawful method to encourage and foster home industries, whether financed and directed by Indians or by Englishmen."

It goes without saying that the above statement met with the approval of the British Press.

Dutt said - that "he looked upon the Englishmen who owned the woollen mills at Cawnpore and the Jute Mills at Calcutta as among the true benefactors of the Indian people.-Swadeshi and Swaraj by B.C.Pal Pg. 164.

An opposite view appeared in the Extremist Bengali paper, ‘Bande Mataram.’ Its author condemned the people, who were buying shares in the joint stock company headed by British businessmen. That article defined the aims of swadeshi quiet differently it was necessary to provide employment to Indian workers and also to create favourable conditions for the use of Indian Capital. Not every commodity produced at home, could be considered genuinely swadeshi said the author.
Unlike Dutt who equated foreign and domestic capital, the Bande Mataram drew a line between them. The newspaper rejected the 'subordinate partner of local capital with respect to foreign capital. Bande Mataram declared that the aim of the movement was absolutely independent capitalists development of India.

B.C. Pal, leader of the Bengal Extremists and a regular contributor to that newspaper – voiced the same opinion–

"We would not allow British capital to be engaged in the development of Indian resources, as British capital is now engaged. We would not grant British capitalists to dig up the mineral wealth of the land and carry it to their own Isles-. Swadeshi and Swaraj by B.C. Pal Pg. 164.

Pal urged that the necessary capital be procured on the ‘open market’ as was being done by America, Japan and Russia, such ideas were received with sympathy by the wide masses. But the commonest weapon of struggle continued to be ‘boycott.’ 8 Times of India Sep. 5 1908 Pg. 16.

Kaiser-I-Hind, stressed the bond between stressed the bond between all kinds of capital, irrespective of the nationality of its owner. The Indian bourgeoisie, chiefly the merchants and middlemen engaged in wholesale trade, importing foreign goods and exporting home goods - a class which had, close economic ties with British Capital.

Representatives of the big Indian bourgeois subscribed to the different views form those voiced by Banda Mata ram and Patriot. Mr. V. Thakerey, President of the Second, National Industrial conference of 1906 stated –

8. By India Department, Institute of People of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences.
"The great mistake to be guarded against is that because certain capital used in India, is foreign it therefore must do harm to the country."

At the same time he stressed the price of suing foreign capital must not be too high and all the profits form it should not leave the country. Japan was a good example, he said of controlled use of foreign capital. But Japan was an independent country as contrasted to India where British capital was encouraged.

He submitted a programme of "business like" co-operation with foreign capital stipulating that the share of profits accruing to Indian capitalists should be increased. The Indian Capitalists who were closely linked with British Capital were eager to set up their own independent Business. In 1907 a group of prominent Bengali capitalists among them D.N. Mukherjee, a partner in big English firm of Martin and Co. established the Swadeshi Bengal National Bank.

The leaders of the liberation Movement attributed great importance of the establishment of Indian companies, Tilak made a number of speeches in Bengal, toward the end of 1906, in which he urged Indian merchants to establish their own banks and focus attention on production.9

The early nationalists highlighted another major problem that of the progressive decline and ruin of India's traditional handicrafts. The industrial backwardness they said was the result of the deliberate policy of stamping out Indian industries in the interest of British manufacturers.

9. Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 394-395
The British administrators pointed out that the rapid growth of India's foreign trade, and construction of railways, as instruments of India's Developments and proof of its prosperity.

The nationalists said that because of their negative impact on Indigenous industries, foreign trade and railways represented not Economic development but colonialisation and under development of the economy.

What mattered in the case of foreign trade were not its volume, but its pattern and nature of goods internationally exchanged and their impact on national industry and agriculture.

This pattern had undergone drastic changes during the 19th century, the bias being overwhelmly towards the export of raw materials and import of manufactured goods.

The early nationalists pointed out that the railways had not been co-ordinated with India's Industrial needs. They have ushered in a commercial and not an industrial revolution, which enables imported foreign goods to undersell domestic industrial products. However the benefits of railway construction, in terms of encouragement to the steel and machine industry and to capital investment had been reaped by Britain and not India. In fact remarked G.V. Joshi — expenditure on railways, should be seen as Indian subsidy to British industries. As Tilak put it — "It was like decorating another wife".

Another major obstacle to rapid industrial development was the policy of free trade, which was on one hand ruining India's handicraft industries and on the other hand, forcing the infant and underdeveloped modern industries into a premature and unequal unfair and disastrous
competition with the highly organised and developed industries of the west.

The early nationalists also criticized the colonial pattern of finance. Taxes were so raised, so as to overburden the poor, while letting the rich, especially the foreign capitalists and bureaucrats go Scot free. They demanded the reduction of land revenue and abolition of salt tax and supported the imposition of income tax and import duties on products that the rich and the middle classes consumed.

The nationalists condemned the high expenditure on army, which was used by the British to conquer and maintain imperialists control over large tracts of Asia and Africa.

The focal point of the nationalist critique of colonialism was the drain theory. These leaders pointed out that a large part of India's capital or wealth was being transferred or "drained" to Britain, in the form of salaries and pensions of British civil and military official working in India, interest on loans taken by the Indian government, profits of British Capitalists in India and the Home charges or expenses of the Indian government in Britain.

The drain took the form of an excess of exports over imports for which Indian got no economic or material return. According to the nationalist calculations, this drain amounted to one half of Government revenues, more than the entire land revenue collection and over one-third of India's total savings.

The high priest of drain theory was Dadabhai Naoroji. It was in May 1867 that Dadabhai Naoroji put forward the idea that Britain was
draining and 'bleedings' India. For nearly half a century he launched a raging campaign against the drain, hammering at the theme, through, every possible form of public communication.

The drain he declared was the basic cause of India's poverty and the fundamental evil of British rule in India. R.C. Dutt made the drain, the major theme of his "Economic history of India".

Such a drain out of the resources of a land would impoverish the most prosperous countries on earth. It has reduced India to a land of famines.

This drain deprived India of the productive capital its agriculture needed and industries need so desperately.

The Indian nationalists asserted that India was economically backward precisely because, the British were ruling it in the interests of British trade, and industry and capital and thus poverty and backwardness were the inevitable consequences of colonial rule. Tilak's newspaper 'Kesari' of wrote on 28 Jan. 1896: "Surely India is treated as a vast pasture for the Europeans to feed upon."

Above all, it was Dadabhai Naoroji who in his daily articles and speeches hammered home this point. Dadabhai wrote: "The romance is that there is security of life and prosperity in India, the reality is that there is no such thing. There is security of life and prosperity in one senses or way in people is secure from any violence from each other or from native despots.... But from England's own grasp, there is no security of property and as a consequence, no security of life. What is secure is that England is perfectly safe and secure.... To carry away from India and to
eat up in India, her prosperity. To millions in India, life is simply half-feeding or "Starvation" or famine or disease.

In the course of their economic agitation, the nationalist leaders, linked nearly every important economic questions with the politically subordinated status of the country.

They began to draw the conclusion that the pro-Indian and developmental policies would be followed only by a regime in which Indians had control of the political power.

The result was that even though most of the early nationalists leaders were moderate in policies and political methods, and many of them still professed loyalty to British rule, they cut at the political roots of the empire and sowed in the land, the seeds of disaffection and disloyalty and even sedition. This is one of the major reasons why the period 1870-1905 became a period of intellectual unrest and of spreading national consciousness.

The early nationalists were laying strong and enduring foundations for the national movement to grow upon. They sowed the seeds of nationalism well and deep.

**PROPAGAND IN THE LEGISLATURES:**

Legislature councils in India had no real official power, till 1920. Yet work done in them by the nationalists helped the growth of the national movements.10

10. Bipin Chandra- India's struggle for Independence Pgs. 100-101
The most persistent demand of the congress was to increase the share and responsibility of the Indians in the administrations of the country. In the very first session, it demanded, the establishment of legislative councils in the two newly created provinces i.e. N.W.P. and Avadh and the Punjab. It also demanded that all budgets should be referred to the councils, that all members be granted the right of interpellation and that a Standing and that a Standing committee of the House of commons should be constituted to receive and consider any formal protests that may be recorded by majorities of such councils.

The second session of the Congress (1886) proposed an elaborate scheme for reforming the council, with 50% elected member, but conceding indirect election by various districts.  

The Indian councils Act of 1861 enlarged the Governor - General's Executive Council for the purpose of making laws. The governor general could now add from six to twelve members to the Executive councils, At least a half of these nominations had to be non-officials, India or British.

This council came to be known as the Imperial Legislative council. It had no powers.

The government had decided to add Indian members into the legislature councils, in order to represent Indian views, for many British Officials, and statesmen had come to believe that one reason, for the revolt of1857 was that Indian views were not known to the rulers. But in practice the council did not serve even this purpose, form 1862 to 1892 only forty

11. R.C. Majumdar-History of freedom movement, Pgs 359
five Indians were nominated to it. Besides, the Government invariably chose rulers of princely states or their employees, by Zamindars, big merchants or retired high government officials as Indian members. The overwhelming majority of Indian nominees did not represent the Indian people or emerging nationalist opinion. It is not surprising, that they toed the official line.

In 1888, Peary Mohan Mukherjee and Dinshaw Petit, representative of big Zamindars and big merchants respectively supported the enhancement of Salt tax along with non-official British members representing British Business in India.

The nationalists reacted very strongly to this support. Through newspapers and congress platforms, they described Mukhrjee and Petit as gilded shams'. They cited their voting behaviour as proof of the nationalist's contention that the existing legislature councils were unrepresentative of India opinion.

These early nationalists moved very cautiously in putting forward political demands regarding the structure of the state, for they were afraid of the government declaring their activities 'seditious' and suppressing them. They demanded, wider participation in legislative councils by a large number of elected Indian members and an increase in the power of the members to 'discuss and deal with' the budget and to question and criticized the day-to-day administration.

The nationalist agitation forced the Government to bring changes in legislature functioning by Indian councils act of 1892. Through this act, the members in the imperial and legislature councils was increased. The members were given right to discuss the annual budget, but they could
neither vote, nor, move a motion to amend it. They could ask questions but could not put supplementary questions or discusses the answers. The 'reformed' Imperial Legislative council met during its tenure till 1909 on an average for only thirteen days in a year.  

The nationalists were totally dissatisfied with the Act of 1892. They now demanded a majority for the non-official elected members with the right to vote on the budget and thus to control the public purse.

The nationalist's members used the councils, to enhance their own political stature in the country and to build a national movement.

By sheer courage, debating skill, fearless criticism, deep knowledge and careful marshalling of data, they kept up a constant campaign against the government. In the councils undermining its political and moral influence and generating a powerful anti-imperialist sentiment.

Their speeches began to be reported at length in the newspapers and widespread public interest developed in the legislature proceedings.

The two men who were responsible for putting the councils, to good use and introducing a new spirit in them were Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Both men were political moderates.

Mehta's first major intervention in the Imperial legislative council came in Jan. 1895. On a bill for the amendment of the police act of 1861, which enhanced the power of the local authorities to quarter a punitive police force in an area and to recover its cost from selected sections of the

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12. Bipin Chandra- India's struggle for Independence, Pg. 113-115
Inhabitants Mehta pointed out that the measure was an attempt to punish individuals without a judicial trial under the garb of preserving law and order.\(^{13}\)

People were accustomed to such criticism coming from the platform, or the press but council Halls, reverberating with such sharp and fearless criticism was a novel experience. The tribune of Lahore commented ‘The voice that has been shut out from the council Chamber, the voice of the people has been admitted, through the open door of election…Mr. Mehta speaks as the representative of the people…’

In another speech, commenting on the official desire, to transfer public funds from higher to primary education. Pherozeshah Mehta reminded the gentlemen of the crying wants of the poor masses for Sanitation. And pure, water, medical relief, primary education he further said that there would be enough funds to spare, for all these things and further education too, if the enormous and growing resources of the countrywide were not ruthlessly squandered on a variety of whims and luxuries, on costly residences, sumptuous furniture on summer trips to hills, excursions on frontiers and above all, on the lavish and insatiable humours of an irresponsible military policy.\(^{14}\)

The officials were fond of blaming the Indian peasants’ poverty and indebtedness on his propensity to spend recklessly on marriages and festivals. In 1901, a bill was brought in the Bombay legislative council to take away the peasants’ right of ownership of land to prevent him from bartering it away. Denying this charge and opposing the bill, Mehta defended, the right of the peasant to have some joy, colour, and moments

\(^{13}\) Bipin Chandra- Pg. 116-117

\(^{14}\) India’s struggle for Independence, Pg. 118-119, Bipin Chandra
of brightness in his life. When the government insisted on using its official majority to push through the bill Mehta along with Gokhale G.K. Pareekh Bala Candra Krishna and A.Khare took the unprecedented step of organising the first walkout in Indias as legislature history. Once gain the official Dom was furious with Mehta.

Gokahla, proved more than worthy successor to Mehta. He was not an orator. He relied primarily upon, detailed knowledge and careful and logical analysis of the data.

Gokhale, gained great fame for his budget speeches, which were reported extensively by the newspapers. He transformed the legislative council into an Open University for imparting political education to the people.

His budget speeches 26th March, 1902,established him as the greatest parliamentarian that India has produced. The finance members, Edward Law, had presented a budget with a seven crore rupees surplus. Gokhale criticized the budget and said. This surplus, coming in times of serious depression and suffering, constituted a wrong to the community. The keynote of his speech was the poverty of the people.

He showed how, land revenue and salt tax had been going up even in times of drought and famine. He asked for the reduction of these two taxes and for raising the minimums level of income liable to income tax to Rs.1,000/- so that the lower middle classes would not be harassed. He condemned the large expenditure on army and territorial expansion beyond Indian frontiers and demanded greater expenditure on education and industry instead.
He linked the poor state of Indian finances and the poverty of the people with the colonial status of the Indian economy and polity. And he did all this by citing at length from the government’s own blue books.

Gokhale’s first budget speech had ‘an electrifying effect’ upon the people.

He won an instant praise, even from his critics and was applauded by the entire nationalist press, it was felt that he had raised Indian pride many notches higher. The Amrit Bazar Patrika gave an unstinted expression to this Pride: We had eve entertained the ambition of seeing some Indian member openly, and fearlessly criticizing the financial statement of the government. But this ambition was never satisfied. When members had ability, they had not the requisite courage. When they had the requisite courage, they had not the ability... For the first time in the annals of British rule in India, a native of India has not only succeeded in exposing the fallacies which underlie these government statements, but has ventured to do so, in an uncompromising manner.

In the next ten years, Gokahle brought a mixture of courage, tenacity, and ability. In all annual budgets and legislations, he highlighted the misery an poverty of the peasants, the drain of wealth from India, Government neglect of industrial development, the taxation of the poor, the lack of welfare measures, such as primary education, health and medical facilities, the official efforts to suppress the freedom of press and other civil liberties, enslavement of Indian labourer in British colonies and moral dwarfing of Indians under development of Indian economy and complete neglect and subordination of Indian interest by the rulers.
Proud of his legislative achievements people conferred on him the title of the leader of the opposition. Gandhiji declared him, his political; 'Guru'\textsuperscript{15}

The congress went on an even course till the year 1905. There was not a single, question of public importance, which did not engage its attention. The views embodied in its resolutions on various subjects of (reduction of military expenditure, a large share in higher government service for Indian's the admission of Indians to the executive council of the Governor general and the Indian council, reduction of the Cost of administration, lowering of burden of taxation) testify the political wisdom of the leaders of the movement.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} India's struggle for Independence, Pg. 120-123, Bipin Chandra.
\textsuperscript{16} S.N. Gupta, History of the National Movement Pgs. 35-38.
PARTITION OF BENGAL:

Since, the constitution of 1874, the Assam as a separate province, had the three Bengali speaking districts of Goalpara, Cachar and Sylhet, attached to it, the province of Bengal comprised besides Bengal proper Bihar, Orissa and Chota Nagpur. It was most populous province in British India with a population of 78 million and gross revenue of more than eleven crores.

The Government regarded the size of the province too unwieldy to be properly administered by single person, and the idea of reducing its size was raised from time to time.

Early in 1903, Sri Andrew Fraser, then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, submitted a comprehensive scheme for the partition of Bengal, Lord Curzon, recorded his general approval about the middle of 1903 and in December 1903 the Government of India addressed the various local governments on the subject and published these letters in the India Gazette.¹

The partition of the state of Bengal intended to Curb Bengali influence by not only placing Bengalis under two administrations but by reducing them to a minority in Bengal as in the new proposal. Bengal proper was to have seventeen million Bengali and thirty seven million Oriya and Hindi speaking people.²

¹. Struggle for freedom Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Pg.17
². India's struggle for Independence, Pg. 125, Bipin Chandra
The new province was created consisting of Chittaganj, Dacca, Rajshahi Divisions of Bengal. Darjeeling will remain with Bengal. The province will be entitled Eastern Bengal and Assam. Its capital will to Dacca with the population of 31 million. The existing of whom 18 millions are Mohammedans and 12 million Hindus. Province of Bengal had five Oriya States with a population of 54 millions of whom 42 millions were Hindus and 9 millions Mohammedans.³

Thus, the partition was meant to foster another kind of division – this time on the basis of religion Curzons’ speech at Dacca betrayed his attempt to “woo the Muslims” to support partition. With partition he argued, Dacca could become the capital of the new Muslim majority province, which would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Muslim viceroys and Kings. The Muslims would thus get a better deal and the eastern districts would be free of the pernicious influence of Calcutta.⁴

There was an outburst of public indignation over the publication of this scheme, of partition. The people of Bengal of all ranks, from the Nawabs, Maharajas, Rajas and big Zamindars down to the common man, unanimously decided to carry on sustained and systematic opposition to the scheme of partition.

The political associations, the Bengal Chamber of commerce and newspapers of all shades of opinion, including the Englishman joined the chorus of condemnation. The Indian National Congress recorded its protest in its annual sessions in 1903 and 1904.⁵

³. Struggle for freedom Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Pg. 18
⁴. Bipin Chandra -India’s struggle for Independence!, Pg. 125
⁵. Struggle for freedom Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Pg. 19
REASONS FOR THE PARTITION

The main argument advanced by the government in favour of the partition was the administrative consideration, namely lightening the burden upon Bengal; the real motive was to curb the growth of national feeling in politically advanced Bengal by driving a wedge between the Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims.

As this was persistently denied by Lord Curzon, himself, and the government of India it is necessary to refer this point at some length. Sri Andrew Fraser, expressed the feeling, that the influence of Eastern Bengal in the politics of the province is very great and out of all proportion to its real political importance. He also regarded it, as an "object of great political and administrative importance to diminish this influence by separating one of its great centres from others".

Curzon was more explicit. He wrote in February 1904-"The Bengalis who liked to thing themselves a Nation, and who dream of a future, when the English will have been turned out and a Bengali Babu will be installed in Government house, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that is likely to interface with the realisation of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again; and you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flank of India, a force, almost formidable and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in the future."

Lord Minto who succeeded Lord Curzon and did not approve of the manner in which the latter had carried out the Partition wrote to Morely that he had become more and more convinced that one of the objects of
the partition was to break the political influence of Bengal "which might have become a preponderating factor difficult to deal with in questions affecting, advanced India ideas if the boundaries of Bengal had not been curtailed."

It is thus quite clear, that the real motive behind the partition of Bengal was to weaken the influence of the Bengalis.

The opposition to the partition of Bengal from its initial stage to the very end was so unanimous and persistent that it has no parallel in the history of the British administration. But this was only partially true.

The lawyers, newspapers educational institutions and various other interests were likely to suffer by the division of territories. The principal consideration was the destruction of the solidarity of the Bengalis, who justly regarded themselves as the most politically advanced and took pride on the fact that their province was the most populous and wealthy and their chief city Calcutta- the glory of India. 6

**AGITATION AGAINST PARTITION**

The 'Bengalee' edited by Surendra Nath published on 7th July a leading article under the caption. A grave National Disaster which forewarned the government of an impending national struggle of the greatest magnitude in case the government did not reverse their decision."

More than two thousand public meetings attended by both Hindus and Muslims varying in number from 500 to 5,000 and occasionally even...

6. Struggle for freedom- Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Pgs.22-25
50,000 were held in different parts of Bengal, protesting against partition.

The Indian Press, both in Bengal and other provinces were unanimous in their condemnation of the measure. The partition was also strongly condemned by some British newspapers.

Various suggestions were made as to the most practical means of throwing a direct challenge to the British Authority, without violating the law.

The one that was ultimately adopted was the boycott of the British goods. 

7. Struggle for freedom Bhiartiya Vidyà Mandir, pg.26,27
BOYCOTT

The boycott was a distinct economic method for the achievement of very concrete political aims. It united Bengal in common struggles against British imperialism. The following years saw the Swadeshi Movement Sweep through the whole of India. The struggle took an economic turn but that must by no means be taken to mean that it was a purely a struggle for economic aims. Swadeshi was the specific form in which the liberation movement expressed itself in India at that time.

The boycott in Bengal was a concrete manifestation of the Swadeshi movement in a particular part of the country which led to the spread of Swadeshi throughout India as a specific form of the liberation struggle of the Indian people, as the Times of India pointed out "A so called Sawadehi movement will be the best thing for the Indian Industries. But the developments in Bengal brought the debate to an end by turning the Swadeshi movement into a concrete form of mass anti-imperialist struggle."  

It must be stressed once again that during the period under review, the idea of Swadeshi was quite all inclusive, being understood by the people as a movement in support of everything national and indigenous.  

The active Swadeshists, as the nationalists came to be known in Bengal began to visit sacred Hindu sites and make speeches exhorting the peasants and handicraftsmen to boycott British goods.

1. Tilak and the struggle for India's freedom by India Department, Institute of people of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences, Pg.354-355
2. Times of India, September 16, 1905 Pg. 5
Religion had a tremendous place in India, which was embarking on the capitalist road. It is perfectly natural that the Indian nationalist, themselves of petty bourgeois or bourgeois origin should have used the religious prejudices of the masses as arousing and bringing them into the struggle against colonialism.

Contrary to the expectations of the British the boycott continued under the impact of the public opinion the merchants were obliged to engage increasingly in the sale of Indian goods. Quoting its Calcutta correspondent the Englishman said.

"Many of the shops that used to stock goods manufactured in the British Isles or on the continents as well as those of the Indian make are now as far as practicable dealing only in goods manufactured in the country. The shopkeepers attribute the change to the fact that most of their native customers now insist on being supplied with goods manufactured in India and refuse in most cases to purchase any article not made in the country. According to impressions made on shopkeepers, the movement in favour of use of indigenous goods, in preference to those from Europe seems among the illiterate classes of the native community to be regarded with religious fervour. The bulk of those who demanded swadeshi goods were Hindus, while only a few, were drawn from the Mohamadan community and comparatively few Marwaris showing themselves in sympathy with the movement. - Times of India Oct. 14 Pg. 7 1905.

The merchants in Bengal, especially the Big Marwaris merchants whose warehouses were heavily stocked with foreign goods were obliged

3. Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 356-358
4. Times of India, 14 October 1905, Pg. 9
to sell British commodities at greatly reduced prices. No wonder both the
marwari and the Bengali trades man declared the boycott impractical
Times of India Sept. 9 1905. Pg.6.

A.K. Dutt wrote when at the end of 1905 the crop failure brought
about a food shortage in Bengal, the merchants and moneylenders took
advantage of that popular disaster to raise the price of rice. 5 - Times of
India June 23, 1906, pg. 4.

The zamindars likewise exploited the famine to raise the land rents
they exacted form the peasants.

The boycott was highly effective in other parts of Bakerganj district
Eastern Bengal, especially in the town of Barisal, which became the centre
of national - liberation movement in Eastern Bengal.

According to J.K. Hardie, the British M.P. who visited Barisal and
a number of other populated points in Eastern Bengal at the end of 1907,
the colonial, authorities left no stone unturned to overcome, the powerful
Swadeshi movement. In some centres matters reached the pass, where
policemen themselves had to engage in the sale of foreign commodities as
no one else could be found to do so.

The students of Bengal, took an active part in the national liberation
struggle and particularly the Swadeshi movement. They were the main
picketers and agitators for Swadeshi and it was against them that the first
Reprisals of the British government were directed. 6 - Times of India Dec.
16, 1905 Pg.81. 8

5. Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 359-361
6. Times of India, July 23, 1906 Pg.4
   Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 361-363
SWADESHI MOVEMENT

The Bengalis adopted boycott movement as a last resort after they had exhausted the armoury of constitutional agitation, like local protests in mass meetings, propaganda in the Press, appeals and petitions and conferences.

The original conception of Boycott was mainly an economic one. It had two distinct but allied purposes. The first was to bring pressure upon the British public by the loss they would suffer by the boycott of British goods, particularly the Manchester cotton goods for which Bengal provided, the richest market in India.

Secondly it was regarded essential for the revival of indigenous (Swadeshi) industry which being at its infant stage could never grow, in the face of free competition with foreign countries, which had highly developed industry.

Like the boycott, the Swadeshi as a purely economic measure for the growth of Indian industry was not an altogether novel idea. It was preached by several eminent personalities in the nineteenth century such as Lokahitawadi of Bombay, Swami Dayanad Saraswati, Bholanath Chandra of Calcutta.

Although the ideas of boycott and Swadeshi were not new they got a new meaning and a new impetus in 1905. 1

1. Struggle for freedom Pgs. 32-33
The idea of economic boycott as a weapon to coerce the British to undo the partition gradually receded into the background. It developed into an idea of non-cooperation with the British in every field, and the object aimed at was a political freedom.

Swadeshi completely outgrew, the original conception of promoting Indian Industry. It assumed a new form based upon the literal meaning of the word, Swadeshi namely attachment to everything Indian. ²

The movement spread to the peasant classes, both Hindu and Muslim. At Jalpaiguri some students made bon fire of Cigarettes, cricket bats, foot balls, clothes etc. But these methods did not prove sufficient for the purposes, so the shops selling foreign goods were ‘picketed’ by national volunteers.³

The government took measures to strike at the root of the problem, (i.e. of popularising boycott and swadeshi) since the students supplied the bulk the volunteers and picketers, the government issued instructions to the educational institutions to control their boys. Indiscriminate assaults were made on the students and many of them were rusticated or fined.

The second method was to control the rural markets, by influencing the local landlords, or zamindars, which owned them. They had large interest at stake and could not disobey the government.

The third method was setting up the local Muslims against the recalcitrant Hindus.

2. Struggle for freedom Pgs. 34.
The fourth method was to ban the processions and meetings, curb the newspapers by rigorous press laws for it was rightly thought that the spirit of Swadeshi movement was sustained by propaganda, carried in the press and on the platform.

The fifth and the last method devised by the government was the confinement of the readers of the movement without trial.

As repression increased, a four-fold programme of boycott was preached—

1. Abjuring of English cloth, salt, sugar etc.
2. Abjuring of English speech
3. Resignation of honorary offices under government and seats in offices.
4. Social boycott of persons purchasing foreign article.  

The aim of this technique of extended boycott was to make the administration under present condition impossible by an organised refusal to do anything, which shall help either the British commerce, or the British officialdom in the administration of it.

Among the several forms of struggle thrown up by the movements it was boycott of foreign goods which met with the greatest visible success at the practical and popular level. Boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, picketing of shops selling foreign goods, all became common in remote corners of Bengal as well as in many important towns and cities throughout the country.  

4. Struggle for freedom Pgs. 38.  
5. Struggle for freedom Pgs. 40.
EFFECTS OF SWADESHI

Another district outcrop of the Swadeshi movement late in 1905 was the wave of agitation against the use of foreign sugar that swept Northern India, largely in the Punjab. The dumping of foreign sugar, at the turn of the century had seriously undermined domestic sugar making, with deleterious effect on agriculture. The area planted to sugarcane shrank from 2,70,000 acres in 1900 to 2,200,000 acres in 1905 while imports of refined sugar increased from 146,800 tones to 323,200 tonnes. - Times of India March 24, 1906, Pg. 9

Early in Nov. a leaflet stating that bone meal was one of the ingredients used in making foreign sugar, was widely circulated in Sialkot. That hurt the religious feelings of the believers and stirred up considerable indignation among the Hindus and Muslims - Times of India Nov. 18, 1905 pg. 1

Similar leaflets were subsequently circulated in other towns of Punjab. On November 20, the merchants who sold that product met in Rawalpindi, one of the chief market for the sale of imported sugar, to consider how the importation of foreign sugar, could be stopped. The merchants brotherhood decided not to use foreign sugar, and to expel, any members who violated that decision - Times of India Nov. 25, 1905 pg. 7.

The importance for giving up the use of imported sugar was vigorously stressed at Swadeshi meetings. The Brahmins vowed to refrain from the use of foreign sugar and set the size of the fines to be imposed on violators. There was vigorous agitation against the use of imported sugar in Hardwar, a religious centre in Northern India.
The movement against the use of foreign sugar had a distinctly religious tinge. That was only in the natural order of things. India was still a country of very strong feudal survivals and the hold of religion was tremendous.

At the end of 1905, the Press began to report the formation of Swadeshi undertakings — “A Swadeshi company was established in Sialkot.

The Calcutta, marwaris set up a Swadeshi spinning and weaving Mill with a capital of Rs. 4,00,000. In Feb 1905, the Swadeshi weaving Co. was formed in Poona for the production of high quality cloth. That company’s capital was Rs. 2,50,000. At Dera, Ismail Khan a Swadeshi stores company was started. With a capital of Rs. 50,000. – Times of India Dec. 23 1905 pg.10

At this time, Gujarat Capitalists and businessmen of Jain faith assembled in great numbers to adopt a decision that the domestic demand for commodities should be satisfied with Indian goods. When the leaders of the moderates shied clear of any initiative in that respect it was Tilak and his followers, who got Swadeshi agitation off the ground in Bombay, which until then had lagged behind the rest of Maharashtra. Tilak presided over the first Swadeshi meeting in Bombay.

The Swadeshi movement stimulated interest in home products. An industrial and Agricultural exhibition was held at the close of 1905 in Bombay under the auspices of the National Congress. According to

6. Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 363-365
7. Lokmanya Tilak a Biography by ram Gopal, Pg. 234
Gujrat Mitra, the exhibition was a "unique and great success" – Times of India Nov. 4, 1905, pg 11

Late in Dec., 1905, an all-India exhibition opened in Benaras, its moving spirit as in the case of all such exhibitions was the National Congress. The account of the exhibition which appeared in the Times of India said – "Everywhere on the exhibition ground, the word Swadeshi meets the eye: "Swadeshi trunks", Swadeshi boots". The products of a number of large Bombay firms were displayed but the main emphasis was on hand weaving.

Madam Mohan Malviya, a prominent leader, tabled a motion endorsing the movement in Bengal and the boycott as means of focussing the governments’ attention on the people’s demands. But the idea of spreading the boycott to the whole of India was not approved by the moderate delegates of the congress, who considered such a measure politically dangerous, Tilak leader of extremists, stressed in his speech, at the congress that the basic goal of the swadeshi programme, the boycott and national education, was the attainment of Swaraj or Independence. 8

SWADESHI AS A MASS MEDIUM OF UNIFICATION

The events of 1905 prove that Swadeshi movement was not merely a movement in support of Indian Industry or agitation for the use of home goods, however prevalent that view of Swadeshi may have been. Actually it was much broader and more significant, Swadeshi indeed stimulated Indian Industry and yet that is only half the truth, for it over bodies the most important things about Swadeshi at that particular time.

8. Tilak and the struggle for India’s freedom by India Department Pgs. 365-367
Swadeshi was the most widespread form of the Indian people's struggle against imperialism between 1905-1908—liberation struggles against the colonial yoke in the period under consideration. It was the first and initial stage of the all India anti-colonial movement. It was the concrete form of the awakening to political life of the masses and not just a small-educated class. Moreover it represented the first manifestation of resistance to foreign domination on a nation wide scale.

Swadeshi was thus the most characteristic form of the Indian national, liberation movement between 1905-1908. In one opinion Swadeshi movement stands as the fullest expression of the early stages of the all-India national liberation movement of the imperialist era.9

The swadeshi movement gave an impetus to all our activities literary, political and industrial's.

Bengal was the centre of Swadeshism but the movement also reached out to other parts of India.

**HOW SWADESHI WAS PROMOTED**

Where it assumed diverse forms of and degrees of popularity. Most often the agitation for Swadeshi took the form of speeches at public gatherings of one kind or another. Such meetings stimulated interest in national problems and united the people.

Collecting money for Sundry funds in support of Swadeshi was still another effective way of promoting the movement. Early in 1906, two

9. Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 367-368
Prominent Bengali leaders. S. Bannerjee and A. Chaudhari appealed to the people, of that province, to contribute to a fund intended – (a) to further the anti-partition agitation. (b) To promote the Swadeshi movement (c) defend persons unjustly prosecuted for furthering the swadeshi movement by lawful means. (d) Protect the rights and privileges of the Bengali-speaking people. In other words definite programme was advanced and every contributor to the fund expressed his solidarity with its principles.  

In Bombay, Tilak assisted by leading Indian Industrialists, including Tata, organised Swadeshi Cooperative Stores. The Swadeshi movement spread to all parts of the country, although it nowhere took so radical a form as the boycott’s Bengal. Nevertheless, the idea of boycott – preference for Indian gods, over British – remained the conversation of the Swadeshi movement throughout Agitation for buying home goods became very widespread. British journalist H.W. Nevinsion found for instance that the Swadesh movement was very strong in Madras. ‘None but Swadeshi goods’. Buy one Nationalist Cottons try one Bande Matarm Cigarettes, were the most telling advertisements a shop could write, or insert in the local newspapers which were particularly strong and excellent in Madras.

In Maharashtra as in Bengal national holidays were made occasions for the dissemination of Swadeshi ideas. During the Shivaji Festival at Poona in honour of the founder of Maratha state – a festival instituted at the suggestion of Tilak in 1895 – an exhibition of swadeshi goods was held (there were 50 tents on the fair grounds, displaying everything from swadeshi caps, soaps, manufactured in Poona, cloth, notepaper and ink,

10. Tilak and the struggle for India’s freedom Pgs. 373-374
11. Tilak and the struggle for India’s freedom Pgs. 374-375
medicines, leather bags and purses from Sholapur, to brass works, hand
looms etc. Similar exhibitions were arranged at the festival in honour of
Ganesh.

The propaganda for indigenous wares at the all India Exhibitions,
which became a feature of the annual sessions of the National congress
also helped to popularise the Swadeshi ideas.

The sponsors of the industrial conference were the very moderate
members of the national congress and it was stipulated from the start that
the conferences were not to have a political character. - Times of India
Aug. 3 1906 pg. 13.

The aims of the conferences were to define, the current condition of
Indian Industries; to ascertain in what direction action should be taken to
help the industrial movement. - Times of India Aug. 3 1906 pg. 13.

The Industrial Conferences coincided with the annual sessions of
the National Congress and were the latter's economic supplement. In the
opinion of the leading congress members – the conferences helped to
“enlarge the field of useful activity of the National Congress - Times of
India Oct. 10, 1906 pg. 15.

For all the spirit of moderation and loyalty to the British
government prevailing at the Industrial conferences and the non-
participation of the extremists in the proceedings, the airing of the
country’s economic needs in the sessions objectively furthered the ideas of
Swadesh.12 - Times of India Dec. 8, 1906 pg. 9.

12. Times of India May 12, 1906 Pg. 9
Tilak and the India’s struggle for freedom Pgs. 376-377.
R.C. Dutt, pointed to the great significance of the industrial exhibitions and conferences for the country. "They indicate a slow awakening of the nation from industrial dependence and servitude and a determination to secure for themselves our rightful place among the industrial nations of the earth." As he noted, the call to develop home industry went out, from all ends of the land, and the Swadeshi movement grew – Times of India April 6, 1907, Pg 8.

Various local associations sprang up in Bengal in 1906; their members came to known as the national volunteers.

The national volunteers among whom there were may students, picketed British shops and stalls, selling British goods and agitated for Swadeshi.

The significance of Swadeshi for the solution of the nationalities question was two fold – firstly it promoted the consolidation of each Indian nationality as such (for instance, of the Bengali people) secondly, it strengthened the feelings of unity and kinship among all the people of India, especially respect to their struggle against imperialism.

Not only was the consolidation of distinct Indian nationalities accelerated in that period, but the awareness of the Indians masses, that they were one in their struggle against imperialism was much heightened.

The appeals to Shivaji whose memory, was honoured, in Bengal during 1906, played no small part in that process. The newspaper Bengalee published by S. Banerjee explained it as follows :-
Success, different forms of mass mobilisation. Public meetings and processions emerged as major methods of mass mobilisation and simultaneously as forms of popular expression. Numerous meetings and processions, organised at the district, Taluga and village levels and cities, both testified to the depth of Swadeshi sentiment and acted as vehicle for its further spread.\textsuperscript{13}

The Swadeshi period also saw the creative use of traditional popular festivals and melas, as a means of reaching out to the masses. The Ganapati and Shivaji festivals became a medium for Swadeshi propaganda not only in western India but also in Bengal.

Another important aspect of Swadeshi movement was the great emphasis given to 'self-reliance' or 'Atmasakti', as a necessary part of the struggle against the government. Self-reliance in various fields meant - the reasserting of national dignity, honour and confidence. Further self-help and constructive work at the Village level was envisaged as a means of bringing about social, and economic regeneration of the villages and of reaching the rural masses. In actual terms this meant, social reform and campaigns against evils, such as caste oppression early marriage, the dowry system, and consumption of alcohol.

One of the major planks for the programme of self-reliance was Swadeshi or national education.\textsuperscript{14}

The Chief medium of instruction was to be vernacular to enable the widest possible reach. For technical education, the Bengal Technical Institute was set up and funds were raised to send students to Japan for

\textsuperscript{13} Tilak and the struggle for Indian freedom Pgs. 378-380
\textsuperscript{14} Bipin Chandra- India's struggle for freedom Pg.130.
Advanced learning. Self-reliance also meant an effort to set up Swadeshi or indigenous enterprises. The period saw mushrooming of Swadeshi textile mills, soap and match factories, tanneries, banks, insurance companies shops etc.¹⁵

In the cultural sphere too, the impact of Swadeshi was marked. Rabindra Nath’s, Amar Sonar Bangla’ written at that time, is still popular today.

In sum, the Swadeshi movement with its multi-faceted programme and activity was able to draw for the first time large sections of society into active participation in modern nationalist politics.

This period saw, for the first time an attempt being made to give a political direction to the economic grievances of the working class. Swadeshi movements marked the very beginning of modern mass politics in India.

Lastly the movement declined because of the very logic of mass movements they cannot be sustained endlessly at the same pitch of militancy and self-sacrifice especially when faced with severe repression.

It would be wrong to see the Swadeshi movement as a failure. The movement made a major contribution, in taking the idea of nationalism to many sections of the people.

Further the movement evolved several new method and techniques of mass mobilisation.

¹⁵. Bipin Chandra- India’s struggle for freedom Pg.131.
Just as the moderates’ achievement in the realm of developing an economic critique of colonialism is not minimised by the fact that they could not themselves carry this critique to large masses of people, similarly the achievement of the Extremists and the Swadeshi movement in evolving new methods of mass mobilization and action is not diminished by the fact that they could not themselves fully utilise these methods. The legacy they left was one on which the later national movement was to draw heavily 16.

16 India’s struggle for freedom by Bipin Chandra Pgs.131-134.