CHAPTER – I

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The two main features of the anti-Partition agitation were the Swadeshi movement and the boycott. In the word Swadeshi “swa” means “own” (compare the Latin suus) and “desh” means country, the letter “i” being the usual adjectival termination; Swadesh therefore means “one’s own country”, and Swadeshi, “pertaining to one’s own country”.¹ 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 Indian. The boycott was mainly the boycott of all kinds of foreign goods, particularly those of English manufacture; and the Hindu agitators expressed it. Swadesh and boycott were positive and negative aspects of the same thing. Swadeshi, however, had a political side which went much further; it aimed at a change in the Government of the country with which the use of foreign goods had little or nothing to do, namely, self – Government or Swaraj.²

There has been some controversy about the meaning of Swaraj, or it ought to be written Swarajya. As explained above “swa” means “own”, and “rajya” means “rule”, i.e., what a raja, or king, exercises over his raj, or kingdom. Hence Swaraj means Self Government, and the official

². Ibid.
translation of “Local Self – Government” is “Sthanik Swarajya”. It was, however, new to Bengal when it was introduced to the local leaders of Indian National Congress in Calcutta, in 1906, by Dadabhai Naoroji, the celebrated Parsi leader from Bombay. Through these two movements, then, Swadeshi and boycott, it was hoped to force the reversal of the Partition by bringing pressure to bear on the Government and on the British elector, the assumption being that the former was very sensitive to agitation, and the latter to anything that touched his pocket.³

The Indian national war was a revolutionary movement in the initial stage. Even so, the two years from 1905 to 1907 were a period of only passive resistance, the nationalists carrying on a vigorous anti-British propaganda and indulging in free use of tongue and pen. They did it with great sacrifice and their protest found full expression in the celebrated Swadeshi movement – the first Indian National Movement – as Jawaharlal Nehru rightly termed it.⁴ There were twin agitations, namely Swadeshi and boycott of British goods. The weapon of boycott was turned not against an individual but against British goods. To the advocacy of Swadeshi, which aimed at using goods produced in India, the advocacy of Swadeshi, which

³. Ibid.
⁴. N.Mahalingam, Political Ethics in Pre-Gandhian Era, Madras, 1975, p.35
aimed at refusing British goods, was added. These activities marked the first stage of the “coalescence” of the Indian people into a united nation.\(^5\)

The watchword of the new movement was “India for the Indians” which, after all, advocated the boycotting of all goods not made by Indian labour. Commenting on boycott nearly a decade after the launching of the Swadeshi movement, Annie Besant said that it “had one admirable effect”. The Bengali youths addicted to the wearing of ugly British coats and trousers, appeared in the graceful dhoti, shirt and shawl of Bengal.\(^6\) The year 1906 was declared as the Swadeshi year. The slogan “Be Indian and buy Indian” was chanted everywhere. The nationalists knew that India’s one sure means of drawing England’s attention to partition and other wrongs of the British Indian administration was the boycott of British goods. As a precursor of the larger boycott programme launched by Mahatma Gandhi under his renowned Non-co-operation Movement (1920-22) first, and Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-32) later, which crippled the British textile industry, the Swadeshi movement contributed substantially to the industrial and political advancement of India. Swadeshism endeavoured to stimulate by all possible means, such as indigenous industries were already in existence but were languishing for want of support. The movement helped to establish various new industries on modern lines and supply the daily wants of the mills. The monetary resources

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of the people would be well-organised and utilised to provide the necessary
capital and skill for India’s industrial regeneration. It would cement, more
strongly than ever before, the forces already at work in various directions to
create a great and united nation in India. It would thereby challenge the “half-
malicious and half- ignorant” misinterpretation set afloat by the ruling race that
Indian people were never a nation but discredited and mutually antagonistic
congeries of races.

India would become Swadeshi in commerce and manufacture, in politics, in education, in law and administration, in fine in every field of
national activity. She had, therefore, to build up her own industries, start her
own schools and colleges, settle her disputes herself and show thereby that
she was fit to govern herself. To achieve this, the Swadeshis adopted a
double policy of self- development and defensive resistance: they would not
only buy Indian goods, but boycott British goods; they would not only have
national schools, but boycott government institutions; they would not only
erect national arbitration courts, but boycott bureaucratic justice; they would
not only organise a national league of defence but would have noting to do
with the bureaucratic executive, except when they could not avoid it. These
strong measures became necessary because, Indians of all walks of life had,
over the years, become greatly addicted to foreign products, foreign modes
and foreign fashions.⁷ Curzon was not wrong when he said that the Indian art
could flourish only if the Indian chiefs, aristocracy and people of culture

⁷ A.N.Kapoor, V.N.Gupta, Mohini Gupta (ed), An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of
undertook to patronise it and that “so long as they prefer to fill their palaces with flaming Brussels’ carpet, with “Tottenham Court Road furniture, with cheap Italian mosaics, with French oleographs, with Austrian lustres and with German tissues and cheap brocades, I fear there is not much hope.\footnote{Saroja Sundararajan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.306.} Indian industries could be encouraged only by ousting foreign goods from Indian markets and creating thereby, a greater demand for home made articles. This would also pave the way to setting up new industries and creating new avenues of employment. But this could not be unless the Indian buyer shed his “treacherous aversion” to things Indian and “treacherous hankering” after foreign goods regardless of their merits. It must however be borne in mind that the aversion to home- made goods or the craze for foreign products was not a common feature among the Indians. This type of people alluded to by Curzon belonged to the upper strata of society. Generally of Indians were not so and in this respect they differed from their counterparts in other countries. For instance, the people of the west needed a certain minimum line of comfort below which they could not do, whereas, the capacity of the Indians to do without was almost limitless. The latter had immense self- control and self-direction- a great legacy bequeathed by generations of austere, simple and clean living ancestors. Admiring this quality of the people of India, Sister Nivedita argued that it was this that made it possible for the Hindus who were once beefeaters, to case to consume it. It was a great transition in human will, brought about by an idea of mercy and tenderness. Affirming that
Swadeshism was the same as the Cow-Protection Movement, she asked “today, where is the Hindu who will eat beef?” She further started, “There will yet come a time in India when the man who buys from a foreigner what his own countryman could by any means supply, will be regarded as on a level with the killer of cows to-day. For, assuredly the two offences are morally identical.\textsuperscript{9}

In the days immediately following the partition, even in Bengal, the boycott was confined to the British goods and so aimed only at the British merchant not the British bureaucrat. But later, however, the programme aimed directly both the British merchant and the British bureaucrat who had his own share of the former’s exploitation. This was the crux of the great Swadeshi movement: Swadeshism without boycott had no meaning as it could bring no benefit and permanent national gain. An ideal example in this context was the failure of the crusade against foreign sugar. The campaign had not helped to diminish the import of foreign sugar as people would not buy the dearer Swadeshi sugar. This exposed the “futility of honest Swadeshi unsupported by a self-sacrificing boycott”. As the Bande Mataram asserted, industrial expansion would be impossible of achievement through pure Swadeshi sans boycott. In other words, non-political Swadeshi, could bring no safe and permanent gain. The immediate problem of India “is not how to be intellectual and well informed or how to be rich and industrious,

\textsuperscript{9} The Indian Review, March, 1906, p.164.
but how to stave off imminent national death, how to put an end to the white peril, how to assert ourselves and live” as Aurobindo Ghose proclaimed. It was the economic uplift of India that Swami Vivekananda had at heart when he thundered more than a decade earlier, in September 1893, the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, that religion was not the crying need of India and that its “desperate need is for bread”.

The observation of Nevinson is also pertinent in this context: “It appears very doubtful whether the Swadeshi movement could have been carried on without a boycott of foreign goods… and as to political boycott, the Swadeshi remained an impotent aesthetic concern till the political movement gave it driving power. Swadeshi is now so strong that it would probably hold its own even if all political grievances were removed. In any case, it was the political motive which spread the Swadeshi vow like a beacon light. In all towns and villages, young men formed themselves into associations to preach Swadeshi and boycott. These men surrounded shops which continued the sale of foreign goods and implored the customers to desist from purchasing them for the sake of their country. Some of these youths threw themselves prostrate is supplication before the customers’ feet. This form of picketing was never violent and in many of these cases there was no prosecution. But the officials viewed with disfavour any kind of picketing. At Barisal, for


instance, Fuller Bampfylde personally forced some of its leading men to withdraw a Swadeshi appeal they were issued to the villages in November 1905. In the same place, through the District Magistrate and Police, he broke up a Provincial Conference in April 1906. Of course, there were places where the boycotters resorted to the destruction of British goods especially “Liverpool salt”. But no thought of revenge entered anybody’s head at that stage. However, as Bepin Chandra Pal stated in London, striking a blow was alien to Indian nature “but, if this government makes passive resistance impossible, God only knows what the end would be; other means would have to be resorted to.”

The Swadeshi movement spread from Bengal to Punjab, western and central India and down in the south. Before long, the new spirit of Swadeshism had seized hold of the minds of the masses throughout the country. It was the first time people supported Swadeshi movement of all shades- high and low, rich and poor, literates and illiterates – joined hands. Hundreds of meetings were held everywhere in India to protest against the partition and to adopt the pledge to boycott the products of British manufacture. At many of these meetings, the audience destroyed the British made articles which they happened to have on their persons at that moment - like shirts, shoes, watches etc. Many English houses in Calcutta

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
wired home to apprise England of the gigantic dimensions the Swadeshi movement had assumed and to caution against sending its merchandise which practically had no buyers among the Bengalis. It was thus the British trade which suffered most from Curzon’s error. This sentiment was echoed, though in an exaggerated form, there is an article in the English magazine which said that giving assent to Swadeshi would mean the absolute ruin of all British manufactures, starvation throughout Lancashire and the other manufacturing districts of England and Scotland, and the destruction of British commerce.¹⁴

Actually the leaders adopted the boycott programme purely as a political weapon which would last only till the cancellation of the partition. It was felt that the British manufacturer, on account of the heavy pecuniary loss suffered, would, in his own interest, extend his sympathy and co-operation to the nationalists to get the measure cancelled. But finding in the course of the agitation that it proved a very effective economic weapon also, it was decided to adopt a policy of active boycott as a measure of protection against the economic exploitation of India by the English. Apart from causing a steep decline in the sale of foreign goods, the boycott programme rapidly revived the indigenous industries. There was a boom in handlooms throughout India.¹⁵


The Swadeshi meetings at Madras signified that the people of this Presidency, like those in other provinces, had entered, upon a period of manhood politically. They resented actively all capricious and oppressive official interference with the lawful exercise of their rights and liberties conferred on them by the laws of the Empire and guaranteed to them by the traditions of the British nation and the repeated assurances of responsible British statesmen. The agitators boldly declared that Curzon’s act was one of revenge on the people of Bengal whom he hated because he believed they were growing too powerful among the various communities in the land. Curzon, thus contributed, though unintentionally, towards making the whole nation surcharged with emotion. His merits made him called as “beneficent Viceroy” who made the Indians feel “the hunger for Swaraj, the hunger for political autonomy and the hunger for occupying our definitely appointed place in the council of nations”. The extensive reaction to the partition and intensive agitation to undo the rash act by the people at various meeting in different parts of the Presidency, were indicative of their feelings of fraternal sympathy for Bengal. At his lecture in Tanjore on “New India”, G.Subrahmanya Iyer devoted a considerable portion of it to Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott. He said that there was noting, “disloyal, dishonourable or seditious” in India’s pursuit towards the goal of Swaraj. At the North Arcot District Conferences over which he presided, he stressed that Swadeshism alone would redeem India from the most impoverished state she was in and also enable her to “pursue a

17. The Hindu, dated 22.08.1907.
career of manufacturing industry.” With her unbounded natural resources, India could not only supply all the wants of the people, but also engage in manufacturing useful articles. “She would then import foreign goods in exchange for her own exports as other countries do”, he said. Successful Swadeshism was bound to injure the British industry for a short duration. But India could not help it for the simple fact that “self-preservation is the first law of national as well as individual life”. Besides, that injury would not even be a fraction of the great evil of the “economic muddle” in which the British administration had landed India. Stating that England would never be exposed to starvation, he pointed out that she would only “gain from Indian aspiration to Swadeshi being fulfilled because a prosperous India will buy as well as sell more articles.” These lectures of the Swadeshis, helped the Swadeshi spirit pervade all sections of people in the Presidency and there were many who religiously avoided foreign articles. Even barbers were declared to have boycotted some of their constituents who wore foreign clothes. This was in deference to the advice of S. Subramanya Iyer to his countrymen in Madras to boycott foreign goods as well as those who used foreign goods. Social boycott was reckoned as a “natural concomitant of passive resistance”. The Government of Madras resorted to repressions, as did the Governments of other Presidencies. Hardly had the Swadeshi movement caught up in the Presidency, when in October 1905, a circular was issued to district authorities prohibiting students from tasking part in it.

18. The Hindu, dated 24.08.1907.
Ironically, it was issued almost immediately after Governor Ampthill, actuated by a sense of sympathy, declared in public, that the prospects and well-being of millions of people depended on the revival of indigenous industries. The movement continued, notwithstanding these obstacles, and was in full swing in 1907.

It was at this crucial hour of unrest and agitation in 1907, that Bepin Chandra Pal arrived in the Presidency. This speaking tour of the “prophet of Indian nationalism”, gave a marked impetus to the Swadeshi movement in the south. Pal was already very popular in the south both as a great political thinker and as a distinguished publicist. He was the founder of the weekly "New India" which was an “avowed exponent of the cult of Nationalism, National Education and New Spirit” throughout India and of the daily Bande Mataram of which reference has already been made. Pal’s association with the Presidency had begun as early as 1887 when he attended the third session of the Indian National Congress held for the first time in Madras. Pal had also served as a correspondent of "The Hindu" in Calcutta. But in those days this “democrat of democrats” and “radical of radicals”, never allowed his democracy or radicalism to interfere with his loyalty to the British Raj. The Pal of those days was firm in his conviction that England was conscientiously and faithfully working for the political

emancipation of India. But the Pal of 1907 was a totally transformed personality, which his eroded faith in the British sense of justice. He mercilessly attacked all his friends who still believed in the British sense of justice. The chief target of his attack was Surrendranath Bannerjee, who was also in the vanguard of the anti-partition movement. It may not be irrelevant to record here that there were occasions when Pal reacted rather aggressively to certain situations in those days. His cable to Dadabhai Naoroji was a case in point. When that Grand Old Man of India had accepted to preside over the Congress session of 1906 in Calcutta at the request of many Congressmen, Pal cabled him to England where he then was, threatening to expose all his “frauds and malversations in the mercantile House” to which Naoroji had belonged more than two decades earlier. Pal seemed to have started, "I will expose you. Don’t come". Naoroji, who was not known for yielding to threats and ultimatums, dismissed the charge as an "absolute invention". He assured the anxious Gokhale who was with him then, "there is not a vestige of truth in it. Let B.C. Pal do his worst. I can’t refuse it (the invitation) simply because he threatens me and just because he threatens me. I am convinced the trouble is extremely grave. The congress has to be saved from the hands of those idolbreakers. I must go there".  

23. Ibid.
Notwithstanding such episode, in mid-1907, Pal was the man of the hour. This stirring speaker addressed impressive crowds, with many prominent political leaders of the Presidency in attendance. The educated elite of the Presidency had already developed a great admiration for him. Even before the partition of Bengal, the expression “Lal, Pal, Bal” had come into vogue. So Pal’s trip had a great significance particularly in the context of the ushering in of the new movement. In all his lectures, Pal spoke at length on the Swadeshi movement, the forces that lay hidden at its roots and the goal it was to achieve. He urged that there should be an imposition of a heavy protective tariff upon very inch of textile fabric that entered India from Manchester and upon every blade of knife that came from Leeds. It should be made impossible for Mauritius, Australia, Belgium and France to ruin India’s sugar industry by carrying away cheap beetroot sugar from India. Britain denied permission to develop the natural resources of India and convert Indians into “a race of coolies”. Pal called upon England to enter into some arrangement with India for some preferential tariff under which “England would have to come to our markets on conditions that we impose on her for the purpose, and if she wanted to have an open door, an honest Swadeshism in India, we would also. When we have developed our resources a little and organised our industrial life, want to open our door not only to England but to every part of the British Empire”.


Pal also elaborated Swaraj, a new word in the literature of modern Indian politics, given by Dadabhai Naoroji at the Calcutta session of the Congress over which he presided for the third time in 1906. Pal’s gospel of Swaraj was that of a truly democratic Swaraj, a Swaraj for all, regardless of community and creed. It was no self-government under the British aegis but outside it. It would be a free and independent “United States of India”. The people would achieve Swaraj “by their own exertion, by their own strength, by their own combination, by their own determination and by their own sacrifice.”

Pal lambasted Viceroy Minto who had declared that the government would not yield to the pressure of Indian public opinion and had invoked the dreaded section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code to suppress a constitutional agitation like the Swadeshi movement. He did not fail to criticise the Delhi Durbar for its extravagance and also the government’s proposal to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the British conquest of Plassey. He questioned their right to call as “conquests” their “successes” in the diabolical game of setting up one section of India against the other.

Commenting on the five addresses delivered in Madras by Pal on “The New Movement”, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri wrote: “Babu Bepin Chandra Pal burst into full fame in Madras as a preacher of the new political creed. For

several days on the sands of the beach, he spoke words hot with emotion and subtle logic, which were wafted by the soft evening breeze to tens of thousands of listeners, invading their whole souls and setting them aflame with the fever of a wild consuming desire. Oratory had dreamed of such triumphs in India, the power of the spoken word had never been demonstrated on such a scale.  

The speeches draw from *The Times*, London, the comment that Pal, one of the ablest and most fervent apostles of the new movement, had delivered in Madras three “missionary” addresses expounding very clearly and exhaustively the “Gospel” of that movement. Pal assured the public during his lectures that the millennium would be reached soon and Swaraj obtained, if only they sincerely boycotted the educational institutions, municipalities, taluk boards, legislatures, all the offices under the government, manufactories, shops and bazaars owned and managed by English men.  

Pal turned a rabid anti-British. G. Subrahmany Iyer, an ardent Swadeshi, openly admitted at the North Arcot District Conference held at Chittoor in August 1907, “I, for one, have lost faith in the old mendicant policy” of the Congress because the British would give nothing at its mere asking. He also said that barring a few true friends in the Parliament, the bulk of its members was least interested in giving India a fair deal. For ten more years,

he predicted, the regime of reaction would continue and all the trials and tribulations of India would increase.\textsuperscript{30} His prediction was only partially accurate in that the oppression and repression of the government were to continue not for one but for four decades. During the course of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, Bepin Chandra Pal, a victorious general, undertook a propaganda tour, in the first five months of 1907. From 12 April to 9 May, he covered south India and delivered inflammatory speeches at Vizagapatam, Vizianagaram, Cocanada, Rajahmundry and Madras, on boycott, Swadeshi, swaraj and national education. Bepin Chandra Pal's, speech had tremendous impact on South India. No wonder, the Sedition Committee Report of 1918 held him responsible for the wide-spread unrest in South India resulting in various trials in 1908, notably of Subramania Siva and V.O. Chindambaram Pillai. The triumph of Pal's speech found expression in the sudden change in the behaviour of the student community, pushing them into anti- British activities. The student unrest in the Rajahmundry College, and the Cocanada riot, served as the epicenter of extremist politics in South India.\textsuperscript{31}

The cry to Bande Mataram was raised as a political slogan, for the first time at the historic Town Hall Meeting held on 7 August 1905 for passing a resolution of boycott and for taking the vow of Swadeshi. Since then, a multitude of voices throughout the country rent the sky with these words and made it the battlecry of a subject nation.\textsuperscript{32}

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30. \textit{The Hindu}, dated. 24.08.1907.
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In 1907 the quiet of the Madras Presidency was disturbed by the visit of Bepin Chandra Pal of Calcutta who came down the East Coast in April, lecturing at the more important towns on the way, and arriving at Madras City on 1 May. At that time he was openly revolutionary in his views, as a perusal of his own exposition of the ethics of physical force will make clear. It is unnecessary, therefore, to go at great length into the speeches delivered on this tour; the subjects on which he spoke were Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott and a favourite form of argument was that, as the people had lost faith in the generosity and justice of the British Government, constitutional agitation was useless. As to what he meant by Swaraj he said in the course of a speech delivered at Madras on 2 May 1907. “The time has come when in the inertest of truth and the civic advancement and freedom of the people, our British friends should be distinctly told that while we are thankful to them for all kinds of things they have said all these years for us, and the ready sacrifice they have made to make out lot easy and their yoke light, we cannot any longer suffer to be guided by them in our attempts for political progress and emancipation. Their weapon is not ours; they desire to make the Government in India popular without ceasing any sense to be essentially British. We desire to make it autonomous, absolutely free of the British Parliament.” This statement was received with loud cheers and shouts of Bande Mataram. 33

The Madrassi V.V.S. Aiyar was more successful. Varaganeri Venkatesa Subramania Aiyar, to give him his full name, is a native of Trichirapalli and a B.A. of Madras University. After passing his law examinations he practised for two years as a pleader in his native town; he went to Rangoon in 1907, and in the following year to England. His close association with Savarkar has already been noticed, and it was reported that, in the discussions as to the methods to be followed in bringing about a revolution which took place after Savarkar’s arrest, V.V.S. Aiyar was the most prominent advocate of the methods of violence and assassination laid down by him. After six months of Paris, during which he associated chiefly with Madame Cama, Aiyar left quietly in October, 1910, letting it be understood that he was going via Geneva to Berlin. He came out, however, to India, and getting through disguised as a Mahomedan turned up in Pondicherry where he was first noticed in December, 1910. Pondicherry was already a refuge for seditious agitators, of whom the most prominent was Arabindo Ghose. Here Aiyar continued his revolutionary work, maintaining a regular correspondence with Madame Cama who sent him a subsidy of fifty francs a month.\(^{34}\)

Speeches of this kind naturally created a certain amount of excitement, and special attention was given to students and school-boys.

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\(^{34}\) Ibid., pp. 182-183.
It is not surprising that there was a strike of students at the Government College, Rajahmundry, on 24 April, five days after B.C. Pal left. Another place visited by him was Cocanada, and the result was an epidemic of insolence towards Europeans, such as shouting “Bande Mataram” at them in the streets. On 31 May a boy who did this to the District Medical Officer had his ears boxed, and the same night the European Club where he was dining was attacked and wrecked by a mob. If B.C. Pal’s tour had continued similar results might have been expected elsewhere, but the news of Lala Lajpatrai’s deportation from the Punjab on 9 May brought it to a close. A large crowd had assembled in the evening of 10 May to hear his speech, but he did not appear, and leaflets were distributed which informed the audience that “As a mark of sorrow at Lala Laipat Rai’s arrest and deportation. Pal’s lecture announced for this evening is abandoned”.35

B.C. Pal left next day for Calcutta and the arrangements to receive him in many districts south of Madras were cancelled. The effect of his visit was felt for some time. Meetings were held by G.Subramania Aiyar, Chidambaram Pillai, Subramania Siva and others, principally in Madras, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin, in which they followed his teachings and the excitement thereby created culminated in serious riots in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin in February and March of the following year. Chidambaram Pillai

35. Saroja Sundararajan, op.cit., p.25.
and Subramania Siva were prosecuted in connection with these events and convicted, the sentences finally awarded by the High Court being six years’ imprisonment each.\textsuperscript{36} After that there was little trouble in Madras; the murder of Ashe, Collector of Tirunelveli, in June 1911.\textsuperscript{37}

Pal's gift of the gab coupled with his fine command of English naturally made him attractive to the educated public of the Presidency. The thoroughgoing boycotter and Swadeshi that he was, Pal's extreme views appealed most of the younger generation who readily responded to his call. Satyamurti among the youngsters was deeply influenced by Pal's lectures in Madras. He was then doing his Bachelor's degree at the Madras Christian College. Overwhelmed by Pal's lectures on Swadeshi and boycott, he made a bonfire of foreign cloth.\textsuperscript{38} To Satyamurti and men of his calibre, Pal was a well-loved Apostle.

The Swadeshi movement, which was triggered by the British decision to partition of Bengal in 1905, saw women's entry in to the movement, and the skillful tactics of several women leaders contributed to increase the participation of women in public life. Attempts at mass mobilization also facilitated this participation. Pamphlets were written in

\textsuperscript{36} Government of Madras, G.O.No.53, Education Department, dated 31.1.1911.

\textsuperscript{37} James Compbell Ker, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.12-13.

\textsuperscript{38} Saroja Sundarajan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.306.
Bengali and widely distributed. One of those was a pamphlet by Ramendra Sundari Trivedi entitled "a vow for Bengali women", which tried to explain the Swadeshi movement in simple language in for a village woman to understand. The pamphlet called upon women to participate in the ritual of Rakhi bandhan and arandhan (not lighting working fires) and the boycott foreign goods.  

The Swadeshi movement had its genesis in the Anti- partition Bengal. At first the congress in India was involved in the agitational activities against British. The congress changed from conservative to political extremism, from terrorism to incipient socialism, from petitioning and public speeches to passive resistance and boycott, and thereby affected our altitudinal change. And it was the beginning of quite a new phase in the history of Indian Nationalism with the struggle against the partition of Bengal.  

The aggressive programme of Swadeshi was the boycott of national education, the boycott of Manchester cloth, Liver-pool salt and "Swaraj" became the slogs of the nationalists.  

People began to participate in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress and introduced the word "Swaraj" into congress parlances for the first time. The Swadeshi movement called the people of the country to promote indigenous industries and consume Indian made goods rather than imported commodities. 

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42. Government of Madras, G.O.No.50, Judicial (Confidential) Department, dated 9.01.1908.
In Tamilnadu, more encouragement was given to Swadeshism. Meetings were arranged in every important town and village for taking the Swadeshi vow “Swaraj” and failure to keep up this vow should mean excommunication. The Tamilians were awakened with patriotic fever. The revolutionary ideas touched the people and they raised their hands against the Government. They did not tolerate the suppression of the movement. The leadership of Tamilnadu new agitational politics comprised largely of young people in their twenties and thirties.

A number of protest meetings condemning the proposed were held in Madras, Tanjore, Kumbakonam, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Vellore, North Arcott, Madurai, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli. The natives distributed seditious notices and pamphlets to stir the people against the British. The Tamil paper Swadeshamitran, published from Madras, attracted the attention of the government by their seditious writing. The extremist leaders like, Nilakanda Brahmachari, Sankar Krishan Iyer, Subramania Siva and Padmanaba Iyer, went on a lecture tour in South India.


44. NNPR, *Swadesamitran* (Tamil), dated 11.01.1906.

45. N. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, p.34.

preaching Swadeshi and sedition. Poets like Subramania Bharatiar of Ettaiyapuram, A. Shanmugam of Madurai composed patriotic songs and Pillai A. Saalambigai Ammal of Chidambaram and Agilandammal of Cuddalore composed Swadeshi songs called “Vandematharam Kummigal”. These songs inspired the people of Tamil Nadu.

V.O. Chidambaram Pillai a major extremist of Tuticorin was treated as the central Pillar of the Swadeshi movement in Tamilnadu. He started the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company and boycotted the British India Steam Navigation Company. Swadeshi movement spread to the extreme south of India during 1906-1916. The rise of extremism completely changed the complexion of political agitation in the Madras Presidency. The visit of Bepin Chandra Pal to Madras and his speech fired thousands of people with the spirit of patriotism and nationalism and attracted them to the rows of Swadeshi and Swaraj. Madras roused to a new life by the wonderful oratory speech of Bepin Chandra Pal.

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49. N. Rajendran, op.cit., p.34.


The interesting and important account of the History of the Swadeshi movement in Madras Presidency was that Madras did not lie behind the violent agitation nor did the government of his presidency kept quite in the face of rising tide of hostile activities against the government which was established by law and order. The Swadeshi movement was only the first round in the natural popular struggle against colonialism. 52

Women became actively involved with the Swadeshi struggle protest meetings held all over Bengal and some of these exclusively women’s gatherings. For instance, about five hundred women met at Jenokand village in the district of Mushidabad to protest against the government’s decision to partition Bengal and to urge to need for using indigenous, country-made goods. Likewise ladies in their streets and colonies arranged meetings and even spinning wheels were introduced in the zenana. 53

Swadeshi movement also marked the formation of several women’s organizations. Mahila Shilpa Samithi (1906 -1918) was inspired by the Swadeshi Movement. Earlier in 1910, Sarala Devi Chaudharani had formed the Bharat Stri Maha Mandal, after serious differences with the male leadership of the National Social conference. 54 As the secretary of this

organization, she worked tirelessly and successfully and instituted branches of the Stri Maha Mandal in Allahabad and Calcutta.\textsuperscript{55}

In the Madras Presidency a women’s magazine was started by Kamala, wife of Indian Christian social reformer Stalinathan. A Brahmin widows home was founded in 1913 by Subbalakshmi Ammal and a Mahila Seva Samaj in Mysore in 1913.\textsuperscript{56}

The women participant’s in the Swadesi movement in Tamilnadu were many in Tamilnadu. One among the women participants was K.P. Sundarambal who was praised by Arignar Anna, the former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu as "Kodumudi Kokilam". She is even now remembered by the people of Tamilnadu as one of the women participants.\textsuperscript{57} Though a famous play-back singer in the Tamil Film World, she has got her special place not only in the film field, but also a lover of freedom movement. All her songs revealed her love towards our mother country and created a sense of interest among the men and women of Tamilnadu. Even when she acted in the dramas along with her husband Kittappa both of them used only songs related to freedom movement. Therefore the Congress leaders like Satyamurthi and Kamarajar praised her very much and encouraged her to

\textsuperscript{55} Prathima Asthana, \textit{Women’s Movement in India}, New Delhi, 1974, p.18.
\textsuperscript{56} Rajan Mohan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.49.
sing only songs related freedom movement. Her patriotic songs created an impression in the minds of K. Kamaraj and he nominated her as a member of the State Legislative by him.  

Local Muslim women’s associations were found in the early 20th century by upper class Muslim women in several cites. In 1916, the Begum of Bhopal formed the All India Muslim women’s conference of which papers on special reforms and education were read and resolutions passed.  

Sarala Devi infused fresh life into the Sushrid Samithi in 1905. This Samithi was started in 1901 as a benevolent institution in Mymensing District of Bengal, later, it became a political organization and its changed creed was not only a reflection of the general trend of the period only a relection of the general trend of the period but was also occasioned by two specific factors. The first was the visit Arbindo Ghosh, Subodh Mulick and Bepin Chandra Pal to Mymensing district in 1906, and the second cause was the predominant influence of Sarala Devi. In 1908 it had six branches in Mymensingh, four in Dhaka and six in Sylhet. Sakti Samithi of Calcutta and the Sevak Samithi of Dhoka were also branches of the same society.  

60. Niroj Sinha, op.cit., pp.74-75.
Sarala Devi’s impressionable youthful years were spent in Western India. In the year 1903 she organized the celebration of Birastni Brata and Pratapaditya Brata modeled on the lines of the Shivaji ‘Utsav’ of young Maratha followers of Tilak. Just as the Marathas celebrated the puja of Bhabai, tutelary deity of Shivaji, So Sarala Devi celebrated the Kalipiya, tutelary goddess of Pratapadiya. During the Swadeshi period she opened the famous Lakshmi Bhandar, for popularizing Swadeshi goods. In 1904 she won the gold medal for exhibiting improved Swadeshi fabrics.

The Swadeshi cloth production in the Madras Presidency during the period from 1905-1906 was 53 crore yards, from 1906-1907 the total production was 57 crore yards and from 1907-1908, 65 crore yards respectively.\(^{61}\)

Sarala Devi initiated certain tentative steps to organize a nascent women’s movement. Presiding over the celebrations for the New year’s Day 1909 and the Pratapaditya Anniversary, Sarala Devi tried to employ Bankim’s Ferrov Mantra “Bante Matharam” as a National Slogan.

Ras Behari Bose had quietly slipped to Japan and number of revolutionaries were sentenced to death. In these circumstances, Asu Bai Sawarka secretly organized the branches of “Abinav Bharat” under the

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\(^{61}\) Government of Madras, G.O.No. 85, Judicial (Confidential) Department, dated 20.01.1909.
disguise of “Aatma Nishta Yuvti Samaj” to avoid the British Government’s attention. She organized the people and worked underground in order to avoid arrest.62

Lucknow on 22 March, 1913, to adopt a new constitution which was to send the Keynote of loyal cooperation with the sister community in all matters of National welfare and progress. Sarojini Naidu had the unique privilege of attending and addressing the huge assembly of Muslim. Here it was that she first appeared on the public platform as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity and concord. Then in Bombay Congress of 1915, held under the Presidency of S.P. Sinha, she spoke from the Congress platform, for the first time in support of the resolution an self – government, concluding her eloquent speech with a poem on the higher vision of a united India. The Madras Provincial conference, held at Kancheepuram in May 1918, over which she was called to preside, proved one of the most stormy sessions help in the annals of the Congress. She delivered an extempore speech calling upon young man to enroll themselves in the service of the empire.63

At this stage Annie Besant an Irish woman, entered in the Indian Freedom Movement. She was highly impressed and influenced by Indian culture and came to India in 1893. Soon she became a staunch

supporter and participant of Indian freedom struggle. With the inspiration of this women, helped Indian women to participate in the nationalist movement and get the right to franchise and other constitutional rights.

### Women's Participation in South Africa Struggle

In the middle of the 19th century, the white settlers in South Africa requested the Government of India to permit the importation of labour from India in order to develop the Sugar, Coffee and Cotton plantations in Natal. Accordingly workers were recruited from Tamilnadu under five year contract with promise of security and land at the end of the term. In November 1860 the first boatload of Indian workers and artisans arrived at Durban.

The Workers of Tamilnadu worked very hard and built the economy of Natal and the coast was turned into one of the most prosperous parts of South Africa. They worked not only on the plantations, but also helped to develop railways and coal mines and some of them moved to Transvaal. After the completion of contract, some workers went into market

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gardening and produced a great variety of vegetables and fruits. Indian traders and accountants mainly from Gujarat followed the Indian workers.  

By 1880 the white settlers felt that Indians had become strong competitors in agriculture and trade. Therefore they began to harass, humiliate and expel, the Indians. Mahatma Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893 and soon became involved in assisting the Indians to defend their rights and honour. A number of appeals and petitions, deputations to local authorities and to the Imperial Government in London failed to stop the harassment and treachery of promises. The provincial Government of Transvaal passed an ordinance in 1906 for the registration of Indians with humiliating restrictions on them. On knowing this Gandhiji decided that there was no choice but to defy the law. He helped to organize the Indians to launch Satyagraha for their rights and for the honour of India.

Gandhiji led a corps during the Boer War. Three hundred free Indians volunteered together with eight hundred labourers furloughed by their masters. For days, they worked under the fire of enemy guns and carried wounded soldiers back to the hospitals. The Indians some times, walked as much as twenty-five miles a day. This impressed the people of England and

67. Ibid.

68. Champa Limaya, Women: Power and Progress, Delhi, (nd.), pp.63-64.
South Africa. Gandhiji and several other comrades received the War Medals. He believed that the courage of the Indian in the War would appeal to South Africa's sense of fair play and help to moderate white hostility; but further repressive measures were passed.\textsuperscript{69}

Throughout 1904, 1905 and 1906, the Asiatic Department of the Transvaal Government diligently carried out all anti-Indian regulations and showed special attitude in inventing new ones. The writings of Gandhiji in Indian Opinion criticized them. At the beginning of the year 1904 the great bulk of the Indian members of the cosmopolitan community of the Transvaal were to be made to leave the homes. They took up their beds and walked to a place of complete segregation, where their existence might be forgotten and life be made as difficult and profitless.\textsuperscript{70}

On return from the Boer War, Gandhiji read the sections of the Transvaal Government Ordinance, one after another. He saw noting in it except hatred of Indians. It seemed to him that the Ordinance was passed and the Indians meekly accepted it, that would spell the absolute ruin for the Indians in South Africa. He clearly saw that it was a question of life and death for them. He further saw that even in the case of memorials and representations proving fruitless, the community must not sit with folded

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Nawaz B. Mody, \textit{op.cit.}, p.305.
hands. Better die than submit to such a lot. But how they were to die? What should they dare and do so? There would be nothing before them except the choice of victory or death.  

The Ordinance demanded that every Indian man, woman or child must register with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration. Failure to apply would be an offence for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported. The certificate must be produced before any police officer. Failure to produce the certificate would be an offence for which the defaulter could be fined or sent to prison. Even a person walking on public thoroughfare would be required to produce his certificate. Police officers could enter private houses in order to inspect certificates. Indians stigmatized it as "The Black Act". When 'The Black Act' went into effect the satyagrahis had resolved to call a mass meeting of the Indians. On 1 July 1907 the volunteers arrived and saw the opening of permit offices. The community had decided openly to picket each office, posting volunteers on the roads leading thereto and these volunteers were to warn weak-kneed Indians against the trap laid for them there, even a single Indian who held it proper to submit to 'The Black Act'. Imprisonment suffered by Ram Sundar for the cause stood to their credit.

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Except a few Indians took out permits under the Act, but most did not. A number of Indians were accordingly served with official notices to register or to leave the Transvaal. Failing to do either, they were brought before a magistrate on 11 January 1908 and Gandhiji was one among them. They were sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour, fine a heavy amount, in lieu of payment they would receive a further period of three month's hard labour. Gandhiji was given two month's simple imprisonment.74

On 14 March 1913 Justice Searle, of the Cape Supreme Court gave judgment which nullified in South Africa all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Muslim and Zoroastrian Rights. Therefore the many married Indian women were ceased to rank as the wives of their husbands, they were degraded to the rank of concubines.75

Patience was impossible in the face of this insult offered to Indian womanhood.76 Gandhiji decided to invite the women to come into line along with the men. He decided not to broach the subject to his wife-Kasturba. But she overheard the conversation and decided on her own to participate in the struggle. Their influence spread like wild fire. The brave Transvaal sisters were sentenced to three months imprisonment. The news of the strike and the arrest spread everywhere at lightening speed and

75. Ibid.
76. NNPR, September to December, 1909, pp.755-756.
thousands of labourers unexpectedly and spontaneously came out in support. The Union Government had not the power to keep thousands of innocent men in jail. The viceroy of India would not tolerate it and all the world was waiting to see what General Smuts would do. Within a short time of the submission of the report of the Commission, the Government published in the Official Gazette of the Union The Indian Relief Bill. One part of it validated in South Africa the marriages held legal in India. The second part abolished the annual licence fee of three pounds.\textsuperscript{77}

The most prominent person who helped Gandhiji in organizing Satyagraha was his loyal and courageous colleague, G.K.Thambi Naidu. When the Satyagraha started in earnest in July 1907, with the picketing of Registration Offices, Thambi Naidu was the Chief Picket. He was the first to get arrested.\textsuperscript{78} On 28 December 1907, he was charged with Gandhiji for refusing to register and was ordered to leave the Transvaal on 10 January 1908. But he was sentenced to jail with Gandhiji for disobeying the order. In 1913, when Gandhiji invited women to join the Satyagraha, Virramal, Thambi Naidu's wife was the first to Volunteer, although she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{77} Champa Limaya, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.67-68.


\textsuperscript{79} Nawaz B. Mody., \textit{op.cit.}, p.310.
It is to be remembered in this context that Moonsamy, a young lady not yet in her twenties. Valliamah, the eldest daughter of R. Moonsamy Moodliar of Johannesburg on 22 instant St. Johannesburg, after a prolonged illness in jail.\textsuperscript{80} It appears that she was taken to bed immediately after her conviction and also after her release was suffering greatly.\textsuperscript{81} The Late Valliamah was born in Johannesburg in 1898 and attended the Government school.\textsuperscript{82} She joined the passive resistance struggle on 29\textsuperscript{th} October last and proceeded to Newcastle with a party of ladies.\textsuperscript{83}

She afterwards rendered her assistance at Charlestown, Dundee, Ladysmith and Dannhousei, Maritzburg, Tongaat and Durban. She eventually crossed the Transvaal border and was convicted with her mother and others at Volkstrust on 22 of December 1913 to three months' imprisonment with hard labour and was discharged on 11 instant in terms of the Provincial Agreement. Her father is one of the pioneer Indian settlers of the Transvaal. He was once in jail as a passive resistance and during the last campaign was very ill and was taken to the hospital where he underwent an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Mahatma Gandhi, \textit{Satyagraha in South Africa}, Madurai, 2008, pp.409-410.
\item \textsuperscript{81} E.M.S.Namboodiripad, \textit{A History of Freedom Struggle Social Scientist Press}, Trivandrum, India 1986, p.207.
\item \textsuperscript{82} N.E. Ramalingam, \textit{Indiya Viduthalai Sirppikal} (Tamil), Adampakkam, Chennai, 1996, p.387.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Champa Limaya, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.75-76.
\end{itemize}
operation recently. They share the sorrows of the parents and express their deepest sympathy at their irreparable loss. With in a few days after this conversation Valliamma was no more with us in the flesh, but she left us the heritage of an immortal name. Condolence meetings were held at various places, and the Indians resolved to erect "VALLIAMMA HALL", to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of this daughter of India. But the name of Valliamma will live in the history of South African as long as India lives.

Speaking at a felicitation meeting in his and his wife’s honour at Madras several years later, Gandhi said: "If one tenth of the language that has been used in this address is deserved by us, what language do you propose to use for those who have lost their lives, and therefore finished their work, on behalf of your suffering countrymen in South Africa? What language do you propose to use for Nagappan, Narayanaswamy, lads of seventeen or eighteen years, who braved in simple faith all the trials, all the sufferings, and all for the motherland? what language do you propose to use with reference to Valliamma, a sweet girl of sixteen years, who was discharged from Maritzburg prison, skin and bone, suffering from fever to which she succumbed after about a month’s time? You have said that I inspired those great men and

84. The Indian Opinion, dated 25.02.1914.
women, but I cannot accept that proposition. It was they, the simple-minded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do. They deserve the crown which you would seek to impose upon us. These young men deserve all the adjectives that you have affectionately but blindly lavished on us.  

Thus the entry of women in the national movement during the 19th century opened a new phase in the annals of Indian national movement. It pared the way for the entry of women in large scale during the subsequent course of action in the arena of Home Rule Movement, Non – Co-operation and Khilafat Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement.