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THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT OF 1905 : A TURNING-POINT IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION Haridas Mukherjee

The subject matter divides itself logically into two broad sections, viz, first, the clarification of the category, the 'Swadeshi Movement', its ideas and ideologies, and, secondly, the determination of the deeper import and character of the movement, whether revivalist and reactionary or regenerating and revolutionary.

Cry for unity of Bengal

The Swadeshi Movement of 1905 started as an Anti-Partition agitation against the British Government's decision to partition Bengal, to break up the unity and solidarity of the Bengali people standing at the vanguard of India's national resurgence. In spite of vehement protests from the press and the platform all over Bengal, the bureaucratic government of Lord Curzon paid no heed to it and despicably boycotted the united Bengali public opinion. 'A boycott of one kind was therefore sought to be met by a boycott of another', as Satis Chandra Mukherjee put it, as the last legitimate weapon of a disarmed people. As facts stand at present, the idea of Boycott of British goods was not the work of a particular man nor was it devised in the country first in 1905. It was an organized expression of the national will and 'the mind of the whole community' made its contributions to its final emergence.

The Boycott technique

From the I.B. Records of the Government of West Bengal we learn that on the eve of the Swadeshi Movement a powerful protagonist of the idea of boycotting British goods was Tahal Ram Ganga Ram (an inhabitant of North Western India and belonging to the Arya Samaj) who visited Calcutta during February-March, 1905, delivering inflammatory speeches every evening before the students in the College Square, and asking them to go in for Boycott of British goods in favour of indigenous products.

His lectures made a deep impression on many young men of Calcutta at that time. This is corroborated by the Bengali Autobiography of Krishna Kumar Mitra, one of the great stalwarts of the Swadeshi Movement. In the exciting times of the Anti-Partition agitation Krishna Kumar Mitra's call for Boycott through his weekly organ, the Sanjivani (July 13, 1905) found a ready response in the country. 'When she (Bengal) declared the Boycott', wrote Aurobindo in 1908, 'she did so without calculation, without reckoning chances, without planning how the Boycott could succeed. She declared it. Was the intellect at work when she declared it? Was it her leaders who planned it as a means of bringing the British to their knees? Everybody knows that it was Kishoregunj, it was Magura, the obscure villages and towns of East Bengal which first declared the Boycott. What brain planned it, what voice first uttered it, history will never be able to discover. None planned it, but it was in the heart of the nation and God revealed it.'

The Boycott scheme which was first applied to the economic field extended before long to other departments involving a totalitarian scheme of Boycott-the Boycott of British goods, British schools, British courts and British bureaucratic administration. Even the idea of social Boycott of persons purchasing foreign articles was insisted upon. But for practical reasons the idea of 'no tax to the government' was temporarily held in abeyance.

The idea of Swadeshi

Boycott was after all a negative concept. Its positive counterpart was the Swadeshi, first applied to the economic field involving the use of Swadeshi or indigenous goods 'even at a sacrifice'. Like Boycott, Swadeshi also soon became an all-comprehensive category. The idea of economic Swadeshi was

advocated, among other things, in Bengal as early as the days of the Hindu Mela (functioning since 1867). In the seventies of the 19th century a Swadeshi movement was initiated in Gujarat and the Deccan. Almost about the same time, thanks to the enthusiasm of the Arya Samaj, a similar movement came into existence in the Punjab also.

So far as Bengal is concerned, it should be clearly borne in mind that the spirit of industrial Swadeshi was abroad for a long time past, particularly since the early nineties of the 19th century. Barrister Jogesh Chandra Chaudhury was 'one of the earliest pioneers' in the field of industrial revival. It was he who 'first started an industrial exhibition of Swadeshi articles as an annex to the Indian National Congress in December 1901.'

Early in the 20th century Satis Chandra Mukherjee founded the Dawn Society (July, 1902) in the premises of the present Vidyasagar College and organized a Swadeshi Stores under its auspices for the promotion of indigenous manufactures. The efforts of the Dawn Society to popularize the cause of Swadeshi goods by lectures and exhibitions, organized sale and propaganda through its journal, the Dawn, were remarkable and together served as a prelude to the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. Rabindra Nath Tagore was deeply impressed by Satischandra's selfless and total dedication to nation-building activities.

The Swadeshi Movement, observed Satis Mukherjee in 1906, 'is patriotic in the first instance and only economic or industrial in the second. A purely economic movement would not have proved itself to be a whole people's or a nation's business, but its activities would have been confined amongst a comparatively limited class of people with industrial instincts and business capacities. The Swadeshi Movement, it must therefore be understood, is not an industrial movement, in its essence, but is essentially a moral movement, in the larger sense of the word, concerning itself with rousing the moral sense of a whole people in its relations with a bureaucratic power.'

Bipin Chandra Pal, the foremost architect of the Swadeshi Movement of 1905, also characterized the national upsurge as a 'spiritual movement'. In his article on 'The Bed-Rock of Indian Nationalism', he wrote thus in 1908: 'The strength of the new movement in India lies in its supreme idealism. It is not a mere economic movement, though it openly strives for the economic resurrection of the country. It is not a mere political movement, though it has boldly declared itself for absolute political independence. It is an intensely spiritual movement having for its object not simply the development of economic life or the attainment of political freedom but really the emancipation, in every sense of the term, of the Indian manhood and womanhood.'

The demand for Swaraj

The fourth idea closely associated with the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 was the aspiration after complete political independence or the separation of India from the British Empire. In the 19th century or even at the dawn of the 20th, the Indian politicians in general continued to believe in the paramountcy and justice of the British rule in this country and considered it an 'irrevocable necessity' for the furtherance of their national interests. In the pre-Swadeshi days (1903-04) even Bipin Chandra Pal and Upadhyay Brahmabandhab cherished the same complacent belief. But with the outbreak of the Swadeshi Movement, the old idea of mendicant politics was rapidly losing its hold on the imagination of the younger generation. A larger and more ennobling ideal for political endeavour was found increasingly intoxicating. The overhauling of the entire Congress, both its ideal and its line of action, was deemed imperative by the more advanced political party, called the New Party or the Nationalist Party, in contradistinction to the old guards of the Congress or the Moderates.

The New Party in Bengal counted among its foremost protagonists men like Upadhyaya Brahmabandhab, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose. It was mainly organized and set in motion in Bengal by Aurobindo. Before the appearance of Aurobindo in Bengal politics, there were certainly many kindred spirits (like his) in the country, but there was no New Party. It was Aurobindo who, more

than anybody else, was instrumental in organizing the men with Extremist leanings in the country into the New Party and animating it along with Bipin Pal with the intoxicating ideal of Purna Swaraj or complete Independence for India.

And this marked a veritable revolution in the realm of our political thought. The New Party sketched and developed this invigorating ideal with the greatest fidelity to the people's will. It had its organs in journals like the Kesari, the New India, the Sandhya, the Yugantar and the Bande Mataram, which played a very remarkable role in those days in directing the national mind along the lines of complete political emancipation from foreign thralldom. Instead of trusting the alien bureaucracy, the New Party sought its strength in the revived manhood of the nation. It declared in no uncertain voice that 'political freedom is the life- breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom is the very height of ignorance and futility' (Aurobindo). And this ideal was officially accepted by the Congress in its memorable session held at Calcutta in December, 1906.

It was at the Calcutta session that the political goal of India was defined as 'Self-Government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies' by the President himself, Dadabhai Naoroji, that old, veteran politician who, only a year ago in 1905, in a series of letters addressed to the Congressmen, could not envisage any ideal beyond 'Self-Government under British paramountcy' as goal for India's political struggle. This significant change in the mental attitude of Dadabhai Naoroji was certainly due to the pressure of the Extremist forces that had developed within and outside the Congress during 1905-06.

But what was a mere high-sounding ideal with Dadabhai Naoroji became the creed and the motto of the New Party to which absolute independence or Purna Swaraj was the only ideal worth living and dying for. But this Swaraj, as Aurobindo said, must not be an importation of the European article; it must be a Swadeshi Swaraj.

Again, during 1905-06 there took place not only a revolutionary change in our political ideal, but also a revolution in our political technique. The New Party rejected the mendicant politics of 'prayer, petition and protest' of the Moderates and advocated instead an organized Boycott or 'Passive Resistance' on the part of the people to render the alien Government unworkable in the land. In the words of Aurobindo, Bipin Pal was 'the prophet and first preacher of Passive Resistance,' which Pal defined as 'not non-active, but non-aggressive' but he never intended it to be a shield for moral cowardice or inaction in relation to the adversary.

This was also the view of Aurobindo. What Aurobindo preached through his brilliant editorials in the Bande Mataram, was disseminated all over the country by the maddening eloquence of Bipinchandra whose was then the mightiest voice preaching sedition against the British Government. The discovery of 'Passive Resistance' was the most potent and fruitful contribution of Bengal school of politics to India as a whole during the Swadeshi times. But this was not the only technique by which the battle for freedom was fought and won. Aurobindo, unlike Bipin Pal, was an advocate of violence to make non-violence also more effective in political struggle.

While the Extremists or the New Party had been advocating the technique of passive or defensive resistance, the more enthusiastic members of the Extremist fraternity began to advocate the philosophy of the bomb. Thus within the New Party further extremism developed and soon assumed the form of terrorism or violence. The party of terrorism was fathered by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose and found its powerful champions in Bengal in men like Barindra Kumar Ghose, Bhupendra Nath Datta, Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya and many others. While their goal was the same as that of the Passive Resisters, viz., the attainment of unqualified Swaraj for India, their technique of the struggle was different. The terrorists did not believe in 'passive resistance' and prescribed a sanguinary and revolutionary battle with the bureaucracy to realize the supreme

objective. They had their own mouthpiece in the revolutionary Bengali weekly, the Jugantar, (founded on 15 March, 1906) which was insistent on its advocacy of the policy of triumph through terror.

The demand for National Education

The Swadeshi Movement also advocated a movement for India's cultural autarchy which took shape in the National Council of Education or the N.C.E. which was something like a National University established by the greatest men of our country on 11 March, 1906. The demand for National Education with its revolutionary contents became an integral part of the Swadeshi Movement. Its supreme objective was the establishment of a three-dimensional system of education-literary, scientific and technical combined-conducted on national lines and under national control for the realization of the national destiny.

Under the National Council of Education was set up in Calcutta the Bengal National College and School (Aug, 1906) with Aurobindo Ghosh as the Principal and Satis Mukherjee as the Superintendent. Vernacular was adopted as the medium of instruction from the lowest to the highest stages, while English was retained as a compulsory second language as an instrument of world culture. Provisions were made for the study of Hindi and Marathi languages as well as Sanskrit, Pali and Persian as sources for the firsthand historical researches. Arrangement was also made for the study of French and German as aids to the study of modern science and philosophy as well as European methods in the study of Indian culture. Systematic provisions were made not only for technical education, but also for the study of physical, natural or positive sciences along with liberal arts, culture and humanism.

Research into ancient Indian history, philosophy, economics, politics, arts and sciences was also encouraged. These disciplines constituted a revolutionary ideology for Young Bengal of 1905-06. And the whole of it was conceived as a grand project for moral and spiritual resurgence of the country. 'The return to ourselves', observed Aurobindo in 1908, 'is the cardinal feature of the national movement. It is national not only in the sense of political self-assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our old national individuality'.

The influence of the National Council outstripped the limits of Bengal and forged ahead in Bombay and Madras Presidencies and the province of Berar. Outside Bengal, B.G. Tilak and Lajpat Rai were the most outstanding advocates of National Education. To condemn the educational ideas of the N.C.E. as based on a 'decaying and corrupt metaphysics' or 'on the basis of the most antiquated religion and religious superstitions', as Rajani Palme Dutt and Jawaharlal Nehru would have us believe, is entirely misleading. Judged by the standard of the times, the educational planning of the National Council, far from being conservative or reactionary, marked a revolutionary leap forward in the march of the Indian nation. Its chief advocates repeatedly stressed that foreign things and models India must accept, but not as a whole and undigested, not by selling herself off to the powers that be, but by retaining her individuality as a nation. Paradharmā Bhayābaha-so runs the ancient warning of the Gītā. It is equally valid for today, tomorrow and day after tomorrow.

Let us now turn our attention to the second aspect of the question, viz. the consideration of the deeper import and character of the Swadeshi Movement in our national life. There was an unparalleled outburst of Bengali genius and creativity in every walk of life. The Swadeshi Movement helped Bengal leap forward miles ahead by a single bound.

The upheaval of 1905 not revivalist and reactionary

Many scholars and writers have often complained that with the march of time the national upheaval of 1905 assumed a religious and reactionary character. In support of their contention they point to the repeated appeal made by the popular leaders in those days to the religious sentiment of the masses through their writings and speeches, by the annual celebration of the Shivaji Festival, by the frequent reference which the great leaders, including Aurobindo Ghose, made to the Gītā, the Mahābhārata

and such other Hindu classics, as well as by the constant use of the slogan *Bande Mataram* supposed to signify the worship of the goddess Kālī. Valentine Chirol states in his *India Old and New* (London, 1921, p. 115) observes: 'The old invocation to the goddess Kali, '*Bande Mataram*,' or 'Hail to the Mother', acquired a new significance and came to be used as the political war-cry of Indian Nationalism.' And on the basis of these alleged religious tendencies he has drawn the conclusion that the spirit of Hindu revivalism—revivalism of Hindu orthodoxy and social conservatism—that ultimately alienated the Muslims from the general movement. Chirol's views on this point are more or less representative of the Anglo-Indian or official views on the subject. In subsequent times this notion found wide currency in this country and beyond and became the stock argument of the critics of the Congress movement. But a close scrutiny of facts will hardly warrant such a conclusion.

In the first place, we should remember that a revivalist movement does not necessarily mean a reactionary movement. As Prof. Hiren Mukerjee has correctly observed in course of his speech at the world famous *Deutsche Akademie* of Germany (1967), that a revivalist movement may have progressive as well as regressive aspects. The so-called Hindu revivalist movement in our country since the seventies and eighties of the 19th century was not an all-out conservative or reactionary movement. Even its greatest protagonist, Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the *Arya Samaj*, did not aspire after a complete return to the Vedic status quo. When he said, 'Back to the Vedas', he simply meant 'Forward with the Vedas'. He did not condemn modern science and knowledge. What he mainly sought to effect was the careful preservation of what was best in Hindu thought and tradition, emancipating the minds of his countrymen from the hypnotic influence of Christian civilization whose rank exponents in those days constantly made arrogant claims to superiority. He cried halt to this dehumanizing tendency then powerfully working in the country and restored the self-confidence which the nation had lost as a result of long political and economic emasculation.

With Dayananda Hinduism was reborn as an 'aggressive' and dynamic religion and the old apologetic attitude of the *Brahmo Samaj vis-à-vis* Christianity was now changed into one of boldness and robust optimism. Swami Vivekananda's manly stand in the matter deserves serious consideration. This moral and mental re-awakening of the Indians with the restoration of their ancient source of power became the prelude to an all-round national resurgence at the dawn of the 20th century, to which Swamiji's contributions were very vital and powerful. It is sheer folly to think that the desire for revivalism necessarily means an invitation to conservative and life-degenerating process. Would anybody dare call the Italian Renaissance of the 15th century a conservative and reactionary movement on account of its passionate cry and adoration for the Classical treasures of ancient Greece and ancient Rome?

Secondly, we should bear in mind that a mere association of religious sentiment with political movement does not necessarily suggest a conservative or reactionary trend just as the conduct of a political movement on a purely non-religious basis does not always imply a progressive or radical tendency. A movement of great dimensions, particularly a people's movement, is always a complex phenomenon, made up of pluralistic strands, partly conservative or reactionary, partly liberal or reformistic, and partly radical or revolutionary. The nature of a movement has to be judged not on the basis whether it has in it a religious tinge or not, but more appropriately on the basis of its predominant tendency. The primary or predominant trend of the *Swadeshi Movement* of 1905 was, beyond the shadow of a doubt,

political. The redress of the burning political question of the day, the annulment of Bengal Partition, accompanied by the rising clamour for *Swaraj* or complete independence for India by means of an organized passive resistance to alien despotism, or by other methods if necessary, was central to the *Swadeshi Movement*. The introduction of religious idealism into the scene, the frequent tendency to appeal to the glories and exploits of ancient and medieval India was not so much the outcome of social conservatism or religious orthodoxy as part of political strategy, designed to intensify and popularize the movement by linking it with the historic traditions of the soil. Tilak was the first great leader of Indian thought who strove to Indianize the Congress politics in the nineties of the 19th

century, and he was the political Extremist of the day. What was begun first by him in Maharashtra found a greater fulfilment in the Swadeshi days.

The intermingling of religious passion with political idealism did not detract from the progressive and political character of the movement; it simply lent a new momentum and driving force to the awakened feelings of patriotism and thus transformed the Anti-Partition agitation into vigorous channels.

Thirdly, we should remember that the participation of the orthodox classes of society (like the landed aristocracy and the priestly order) did not render the national movement of 1905 an orthodox or conservative agitation; it simply expressed the deeper truth that even these orthodox classes could not escape the impact of the New Spirit then working in the country.

Fourthly, the top-ranking leaders of the Swadeshi Movement (like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose) did never allow the subordination of politics to religion. The I.B. Records, West Bengal, repeatedly assert that Aurobindo Ghose 'first conceived the idea of training missionaries to be sent forth in Sannyasi garb to all ends of India to preach the new religion, which was the worship of the motherland'. (Vide L. No. 47, p. 3). In his speeches and journalistic propagandism of those days, the political trend is too palpable to be ignored even by the casual observers. His editorial articles in the *Bande Mataram*, the greatest and most influential mouthpiece of the Extremists of the time, provide the best answer to the question. True, there was noticeable in his writings the frequent use of such expressions as Sri Krishna, Chaitanya, Kàli and the Bhawàni Mandir, but these expressions were very often used by him not in their ordinary and literal senses, but in a figurative way.

Fifthly, it is a gross mistake to think that the cultural outlook of the Extremist leaders of the time was conservative and reactionary. They did neither condemn modern science and technology nor did they ever seek to build up the national movement on a corrupt and outworn social system. The cultural aspect of the Swadeshi Movement as embodied in the National Education Movement, was, far from being conservative or reactionary, a radical ideal and it breathed a revolutionary fire in those days in the realm of education and culture. The courses and curricula of the National Council of Education, Bengal, were far in advance: of what then existed or even now exist in the Indian universities.

Sixthly, Chitral's interpretation of *Bande Mataram* is fundamentally fallacious. *Bande Mataram* was never invoked for the worship of the goddess Kàli nor did this worship ever become 'the political war-cry of Indian Nationalism'. The slogan meant the worship of the Mother, and the Mother was no other than the Motherland herself. This was a new conception of patriotism of which Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was the seer and prophet, and Aurobindo Ghose the high priest.

Seventhly, when the Swadeshi Movement first began, both Hindus and Muslims joined it in very large numbers. At a later stage, however, the Muslims began to stand aloof from the Congress movement and even in opposition to it. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, who was originally a staunch anti-partitionist, became before long the strongest supporter of Partition. He then dubbed the Congress a Hindu organization swayed by Hindu revivalist sentiment. And this later change in the attitude of the Muslims towards the Swadeshi Movement was not really due to the association of so-called Hindu revivalism, but fundamentally due to certain other forces, of which the British imperialist policy of divide and rule by working upon the religious sentiments of the Muslims may be counted as the foremost. Even when the Congress was all-too moderatist in outlook and constitution, when there was no introduction of the Shivaji Festival and the like in Indian political life, the National Congress came to be branded as a Hindu assembly and the Congress movement as a Hindu movement as early as the year 1886 (Vide the official Report of the Congress for 1886).

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the father of Muslim separatist politics and leader of Muslim opposition to the Congress, was at first a protagonist of 'one indivisible Indian nation' comprising both the Hindus and the Muslims as children of the same mother. But after his elevation to the Knighthood the sheet anchor

of his policy became, under strong official influences, an opposition to the Hindus and close collaboration with the British. The members of the Aga Khan deputation to the Viceroy at Simla (1906) were the ideological successors of Syed Ahmed Khan, and advanced against the Congress and the national movement the same line of criticism as adopted by their great predecessor about two decades earlier. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca was the most redoubtable champion of Muslim separatist politics during the Swadeshi days.

It is fair to admit in this connection that the Muslim bitterness in the matter of Boycott agitation was not entirely groundless. The constant cry of the anti-partitionists for Boycott of British goods and the use of Swadeshi articles 'even at a sacrifice' (the supply of which was certainly below the minimum level) estranged the general bulk of the poor Muslims of the New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam from the Hindu-dominated Swadeshi Movement. This economic aspect of Muslim bitterness was closely noticed by Stuart Becker, the D.I.G. of the New Province, towards the end of 1906. But a historian must be careful to note at the same time that although a great bulk of the Muslim community withdrew from the Swadeshi Movement in 1906-07, yet numerous Muslims, particularly of the lower classes, still continued to pay their allegiance to the Swadeshi cause.

The Muslim peasants of Backergunje, in particular, under the leadership of Aswini Kumar Dutt continued to work for the national cause during the fateful years of 1906-07. Hence the total alienation of the Muslims from the Hindus in the national movement of 1905 was not a reality. The British journalist Nevinson in his memorable work, *The New Spirit in India* (1908), has recorded many startling news regarding Muslim role in the Swadeshi Movement.

It is worthwhile to observe that if any religion was preached at all by the Extremist political leaders of that time, it was the religion of patriotism of which Aurobindo Ghose was the greatest apostle. This new and invigorating ideal of Indian Nationalism was not based nor was ever intended to be based on rotten and decadent social ideas. It aimed at the liberation of India from alien subjection by whatever means the circumstances could suggest, and sought through India's liberation the salvation of humanity.

The Glorious Bengali Revolution of 1905

Thus the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 with its ideologies of Boycott, Swadeshi, Swaraj and National Education, far from being conservative or reactionary, marked a revolutionary advance in India's journey towards political and cultural freedom. And these alterations were effected with such an overpowering sense of suddenness as to elevate the national upheaval of 1905 to the rank of a revolution.

The concept of revolution signifies change, though the converse is not true. It means, in the first place, not ordinary and superficial changes, but implies by its very nature a thoroughgoing transformation both of the social pattern and process. A revolution worth the name is marked not merely by qualitative changes; it has also a quantitative aspect. In other words, the changes introduced must not be confined to a few individuals but be 'massive in quantity and variety.' On its qualitative side, the Swadeshi Movement brought about a radical change in our whole mental attitude towards the British Raj. The hypnotic spell of the magic mantra that the British rule in India was a divine dispensation—a long-cherished illusion—was now rudely shattered. It was now keenly realized by the nation that overshadowed by a foreign culture and as a subordinate part of a foreign empire, India could have no future.

Again, in its quantitative aspect, the upheaval of 1905 affected the lives and destinies of millions of our countrymen. It was not a party rising nor a class upsurge but a gigantic national movement in which both classes and masses stood combined in opposition to alien despotism. Nor was the movement confined to Bengal alone. Other parts of India also were deeply stirred by this epoch-making upheaval. The maddening speeches of Bipin Chandra Pal at the Madras Sea Beach in 1907 on Boycott, Swadeshi, Swaraj and National Education had the miraculous impact of awakening Madras and the

whole Deccan to the magic mantra of Indian Nationalism emanating from Bengal. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was one among the countless young men listening with devouring passion to Bipin Pal's oratorical hypnotism of 1907.

Another very significant characteristic of revolution is to be found in the element of suddenness. Even in 1902, at the Ahmedabad Congress, Surendra Nath Banerjea declared from the presidential chair that 'We plead for the permanence of the British rule in India'; but ere three years had passed when turbulent voices of opposition to the continuance of the British rule in India became clearly audible. When the Swadeshi Movement first began in Bengal and the doctrine of Boycott or comprehensive Passive Resistance was resorted to as the last legitimate instrument of retaliation, the whole of India was deeply astonished at this sudden change in Bengal's mental attitude to the British Government. Even the Anglo-Indians or the Europeans also were taken by surprise. In the writings of Alfred Lyall and Valentine Chirol one will easily find a corroboration of the point.

The last but not least important accompaniment of a political revolution is the element of force, violence, bloodshed, a feature which manifested itself very conspicuously in course of the Swadeshi Movement. The terrorist (more correctly, revolutionary) tendency already working in the country rapidly crystallized itself after 1905 into a new party with its concomitant philosophy of the bomb. The revolutionaries were advocates of violent methods and believed in 'purification by blood and fire' for the country's freedom covering all sides of national life.

Thus all the essential features of a revolutionary movement marked the course and progress of the national upheaval of 1905. It is not for nothing that the late Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar repeatedly called it 'the Glorious Bengali Revolution of 1905'.

Dr Bhupendra Nath Datta, the renowned Marxist sociologist, who was also the Editor of the revolutionary Yugantar weekly, holds an identical view with Prof. Benoy Sarkar in this matter. Reviewing the political situation in India in 1907, Lord Minto, the Viceroy, while discussing 'The Seditious Meetings Bill' in the Legislative Council sounded a note of caution (2nd November, 1907) when he said: 'The Government of India would be blind indeed to shut its eyes to the awakening wave which is sweeping over the Eastern world, overwhelming old traditions, and bearing on its crest a flood of new ideas.'

To conclude, if the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 has left any message for India and mankind, it is the message of uttermost self-sacrifice for the country conceived as the Mother of which Aurobindo was the most shining figure during the Swadeshi days, but that spirit of noble dedication and self-sacrifice gradually gave way to self-seeking politics and 'maddening chase for . . . purse' in the closing years of Indian Independence Movement.

Fifty-nine years after Independence, as a close observer of the turns and realities of Indian politics I, as an octogenarian, often feel today, very sad and agonized at the corrupt and degrading political scenario of India. The political leadership, by and large, has gone bankrupt. Those who are constantly crying themselves hoarse for freedom, democracy, secularism and other noble virtues are, in the words of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, 'more anxious to build themselves than to build the nation'. No nation or country can ever be built by this type of ignoble and self-seeking leadership. India will no doubt rise again to the full height and depths of her greatness when the present self-seeking leadership will be overthrown root and branch by the organized idealism and vigorous action of a truly dedicated hand of young men such as Bengal once produced during the fiery Swadeshi times.

NOTE AND REFERENCES

Based substantially on the following works written jointly by Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee: The Origins of the National Education Movement (1957, 2000), India's Fight for Freedom (1958), Swadeshi Movement O Banglar Navajug (1961,2004) and Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics (1964, 1997) as well as on Hiren Mukerjee's Recalling India's Struggle for Freedom (1982), Peter Heehs' The Bomb in Bengal (1973), Uma Mukherjee's Two Great Indian Revolutionaries (1964, 2004) and Bangabhanga O Samakalin Bangasamaj (2005) collected and edited by Kamal Choudhuri.

* Formerly Professor and Head of the Department of History, Presidency College, and currently Saradananda Professor of Indological Studies and Research at RMIC, Haridas Mukherjee delivered this lecture at the Institute on 30 June 2006.