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# Swadeshi Movement in Rajasthan During British Period

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## Abstract

*This research article brings into light the spread of the Swadeshi movement in Rajasthan. Swadeshi movement started in 1905 C.E. in Bengal to annual the decision of partition of Bengal. From the traditional method of 3p's that is petition, prayer and public meetings, the national movement and Indian National Congress underwent a change. The boycott of foreign goods and the use of swadeshi goods was the paramount activity of Swadeshi movement. The movement was initially limited to the Bengal area, but later on spread to other parts of India. In Rajasthan, the first signs of Swadeshi movement appeared through speeches of Dayanand Saraswati. Later in South Rajasthan, Swami Govind Giri through Samp Sabha popularized the use of Swadeshi and it was one of the ten vows which every disciple of him had to take. Rambilas Sarda and Damodar Das Rathi also worked vehemently for spreading message of Swadeshi. However due to heavy repressive policy of British, Swadeshi movement died an early death.*

**Keywords:** Swadeshi, Boycott, Paramount, Samp Sabha, Popularized, Repressive.

There were three phases of the Swadeshi movement in India during the British period before independence. First phase from 1850 C.E. to 1904 C.E., developed by leaders like Dada Bhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ganesh Vasudev Joshi and Hindu religious leader Swami Dayanand Saraswati; second phase from 1905 C.E. to 1917 C.E., which began with and because of the partition of Bengal in 1905 C.E. by Lord Curzon; third phase from 1918 C.E. to 1947 C.E., in which swadeshi thought was shaped by Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by the rise of Indian industrialists.

Swadeshi movement rediscovered the value of indigenous tradition which included a large variety of concepts. Moderates interpreted boycott in the limited sense of boycotting British goods while the extremist version of the boycott extended it further into a kind of non-cooperation with imperial administrative institutions.<sup>1</sup>

In Rajasthan there were all the three phases of Swadeshi movement. In this, article first two phases are discussed. The Rajasthan tour of Swami Dayanand Saraswati initiated the first phase of Swadeshi movement and the second phase was led by Guru Govind Giri through Samp Sabha, Sarda family of Ajmer and Damodar Das Rathi, the industrialist and revolutionary.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati visited Rajasthan in 1878 C.E. and again during 1881-83C.E., and gave speeches on social reforms, religious revival, swadeshi and nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Swami Dayanand Saraswati

mainly emphasized upon four factors, viz., *Swadharna, Swarajya, Swadeshi and Swabhasa*. He emphasized that a nation cannot make progress unless it follows its own language, religion and is ruled by its own Government.<sup>3</sup>

He denounced the salt tax even in 1875 C.E. which was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 C.E. He stressed that a foreign Government, whatever be its merits, cannot make the people happy.<sup>4</sup>

Swami Dayanand Saraswati was perhaps the first prominent leader who supported the cause of swadeshi clothes. He advised Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur to discard foreign clothes and wear swadeshi clothes. Accordingly, the Maharaja of Jodhpur accepted his advice. As Har Bilas Sarda observes, "*Everyone in the service of the state, from Maharaja down to peons, and the elite of Jodhpur state, adopted the Khadi produced in Marwar*". Thus, long before the cult of swadeshi spread through Bengal, Marwar had appeared clothed in Khadi.<sup>5</sup>

Swami Dayanand Saraswati also emphasized over the adoption of Hindi as the national language. To Swamiji's mind, no reform was possible without having one religion and one language.<sup>6</sup> He also encouraged the people to support the cause of Hindi before Mr. Hunter, the Chairman of Education Commission, appointed by the Government of India.<sup>7</sup>

The second phase of the Swadeshi movement started in 1905 C.E. in Bengal to annual the decision of partition of Bengal. From the traditional method of 3p's that is petition, prayer and public meetings, the national movement and Indian National Congress underwent a change. The boycott of foreign goods and use of swadeshi goods was the paramount activity of Swadeshi movement. The movement was initially limited to Bengal area but later on spread to other parts of India.<sup>8</sup>

In Rajasthan, the first signs of the Swadeshi movement appeared in Banswara, Sirohi, Dungarpur and Mewar where the tribal had organised themselves under the leadership of Guru Govind Giri for representing their

grievances before the local rulers and the British Government. By Samp Sabha, formed in 1883 C.E., Govind Guru propagated his views among the Bhils. Among them use of swadeshi was paramount. Use of swadeshi was one of the ten vows which every disciple of Govind Guru had to take. Under the leadership of Govind Giri people boycotted the foreign goods and used swadeshi goods only. Govind Giri asked the people to give up the use of intoxicating drugs also.<sup>9</sup> The Samp Sabha urged the growth of indigenous crafts and industries, boycott of foreign goods, local level administrative reforms and the revival of the Panchayat system of local decision making and governance in the Bhil areas.<sup>10</sup>

As Samp Sabha started to assume the political character British Government got alarmed. Accordingly, by an order of the British Government the Samp Sabha was disbanded in 1908 C.E. and the rulers were asked to check the Swadeshi movement as the British Government regarded it as an act of sedition.<sup>11</sup> As the movement challenged the powers of the feudal jagirdars and rulers, the affected states took a stand against the Samp Sabha. The organisation was not fully stamped out through and continued to be active till 1913, when it was suppressed by joint British and states forces action, as they put down an attempt at forming a Bhil Raj.<sup>12</sup>

In Ajmer Rambilas Sarda was a great patron of swadeshi and used swadeshi goods as far as possible for his family. He said that after his death, his body should be wrapped in Khadi and *dushala* should not be put on it. His son Chand Karan Sarda worked for promotion of Hindi through Nagari Pracharini Sabha.<sup>13</sup>

In Beawar area torch of swadeshi was lightened by Damodar Das Rathi, an industrialist turned into revolutionary after coming into contact with Shyamji Krishna Varma. After the inspiration from Aurobindo Ghosh, Damodar Das Rathi worked for the swadeshi concept. Damodar Das Rathi firmly believed in the use of swadeshi goods and he himself always dressed in that style. He emphasized regularly on the self-reliance of the nation and wanted that all the

required needs of the nation be satisfied domestically. In this aspect he worked energetically for promoting swadeshi goods and also through manufacturing cotton clothes in his Krishna Mill at Beawar.

Wherever he went in Rajasthan and outside Rajasthan, he tried to establish school libraries, gurukuls and organize various seminars. He also contributed to already established schools, the Sanatan Dharma School and college at Beawar. Navbharat School of Marwari and Shiksha Mandal, Wardha, has existence till today.

Damodar Das Rathi always encouraged non-resident Rajasthani people. He contacted with the Rajasthani living in different parts of the nation and promulgated them to work for the nation. It was due to his efforts that Rajasthani's have opened many schools, colleges, hospitals, libraries, hostels, girls' schools and colleges throughout India. He requested Rajasthanis to preserve the rich culture of Rajasthan, in the area wherever they live.<sup>14</sup>

Damodar Das Rathi was the first to recognize that industry would affect a revolution in the society of Rajputana and its real rulers would be scientists and industrialists not princes and nobles. He was a practical businessman, philanthropist and a reformer. His heart was touched by poverty, squalor and drunkenness among the poor. Through Krishna Mill he provided employment to the needy and financing those who were keen to serve the society.<sup>15</sup>

Damodar Das Rathi was also supporter of Hindi. In 1914 he decided to do all his work in Hindi. He established Nagari Pracharini Sabha in Beawar and waged a struggle for the cause of using Nagari script and Hindi language.<sup>16</sup>

The newspapers like Rajasthan Sandesh, Navin Rajasthan, Tyag Bhoomi and others published from Ajmer educated the masses on swadeshi issue and kept well informed about the programmes on swadeshi.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, we see that the efforts of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Guru Govind Giri, Sarada family of Ajmer and Damodar Das Rathi, promulgated the

Swadeshi movement in Rajasthan, irrespective of the heavy repressive policy of the British. The concept of swadeshi affected Rajasthan in many dimensions and gave thrust to the freedom struggle of India.

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