Chapter Three

SWADESHI ENTERPRISE AND BOYCOTT

I. The Genesis and Ideology of Economic Swadeshi

In its specifically economic aspect, swadeshi may be defined as the sentiment—closely associated with many phases of Indian nationalism—that indigenous goods should be preferred by consumers even if they were more expensive than and inferior in quality to their imported substitutes, and that it was the patriotic duty of men with capital to pioneer such industries even though profits initially might be minimal or nonexistent. Swadeshi thus is a term of narrower scope than indigenous enterprise, much of which could, and often did, follow the more profitable frankly compradore lines. My purpose here is to examine the roots and nature of this ideology, developing in Bengal from about 1870 to a point of climax in the 1905 days, and to investigate the extent—rather meagre, as we shall see—to which this swadeshi spirit could manifest itself through economic activities having, or at least claiming, a patriotic component.

Swadeshi ideology in Bengal, like Minerva’s owl, began its flight only after dusk. Despite some valiant recent efforts to prove the contrary,¹ it still seems fairly safe to assert that the nineteenth century was marked by the decline of many of India’s—and Bengal’s—traditional handicrafts. That at least was the assumption commonly made by nationalist and official circles alike—an 1890 survey for instance admitted that all Bengali handicrafts were declining except woodwork, brass-

¹ Morris D. Morris, “Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History” (Journal of Economic History, December 1963) and “Trends and Tendencies in Indian Economic History” (Indian Economic and Social History Review, Volume V, No. 4, 1968).
ware, matwork and pottery,² and a 1908 report spoke of a 5 per cent decrease in the number of weavers and their dependants in Bengal between 1891 and 1901³—and even if exaggerated, this theory of industrial ruin undoubtedly influenced swadeshi thinking very profoundly.

If the decline in indigenous industrial techniques ruled out the possibility of the producer becoming merchant and capitalist in the “really revolutionary way”⁴ of the Marxian model, the alternative Prussian or Japanese or even Tsarist-Russian path of state-aided industrial development was also impossible under colonial conditions. Minto and Ibbetson in their private correspondence admitted the justice of the familiar nationalist charge of discrimination against Bombay textiles—“the excise duty on cotton” was “quite inexcusable. Of course it exists simply in the interests of Manchester goods ... No self-governing colony would stand such things for five minutes.”⁵ Official economic policy in the nineteenth century cannot really be explained in terms of an abstract creed of laissez faire,⁶ and government expenditure in the railway, military and public works departments did encourage certain types of industries;⁷ the crucial point is that the benefits of such state patronage went overwhelmingly to Europeans.⁸

⁴ Karl Marx, Capital, Volume III (1894), Chapter XX, p. 393.
⁵ Minto to Ibbetson, 7 December 1907, replying to a letter dated 21 November 1907 in which that by no means Indophil bureaucrat had suggested a private appeal to Morley for a reexamination of the excise issue. Minto felt that “political consideration, such as the Manchester vote” would rule out any such measure. Minto Papers, Correspondence with Persons in India, M. 981.
⁸ Amiya Kumar Bagchi, “European and Indian Entrepreneurship in
In Western India, certain indigenous business groups—most notably at first the Parsis—were able to utilise their well-established comrade position in commerce as a springboard for genuine industrial development.\(^9\) In Bengal, however, the age of great Calcutta merchants and entrepreneurs—quite often of upper-caste origin (Ramdulal De, Dwarkanath Tagore, Digambar Mitra)—collaborating and competing on equal terms with the British was definitely over by the 1850s.\(^10\) With a few exceptions like the Bhagyakul Roys with rice and jute trading interests, the Bengali business community by the late nineteenth century consisted of socially not-too respectable “second-hand merchants and commission traders doing smallscale business”\(^11\)—as for example the Shaha caste in many parts of East Bengal—and even here the Bengali was being squeezed out by the Marwari trader.\(^12\)

The English-educated elite which was to spearhead the national—and swadeshi—movement in Bengal derived its income from the liberal professions (government service, education, law, medicine, journalism), with which was often combined rent from zamindari or intermediate tenure-holding; it was hardly a bourgeoisie in the precise sense of the term. British capital in the meantime had consolidated its

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\(^11\) N. K. Sinha, op. cit., p. 120.

\(^12\) “About this time (1891-92) another matter began seriously to occupy my thoughts... the adventurous non-Bengalis, notably the Marwaris from the barren deserts of Rajputana, were swarming not only in Calcutta but also in the interior of Bengal and capturing all key points of the export and import business...”—Prafulla C. Ray, Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist (Calcutta, 1932), Vol. I, pp. 89-90.
position in Bengal, dominating the structure of overseas and wholesale trade and finance, and establishing through the managing-agency system a firm grip over the new lines of business—jute, tea and coal.\(^\text{13}\)

In 1867 Kishorilal Mukherji started the Sibpur Iron Works near Howrah, which was still in operation in the swadeshi period, with 110 workers in 1908.\(^\text{14}\) The next really successful Bengali industrial effort came only in 1893, when Prafullachandra Ray started his Bengal Chemicals.\(^\text{15}\) Yet it was precisely this period which saw the emergence of a swadeshi ideology—1867 is also the date of the Hindu Mela, with its exhibitions of swadeshi crafts. Psychologically this paradox is not difficult to explain—as the editor of the Mukherji’s Magazine assured Bholanath Chandra, “The disorganisation of commerce at present has disposed mercantile men usually impatient of literature, to an attentive hearing to any prophet who discourses on the ‘why and wherefore’ of their present situation and the ‘what next’.”\(^\text{16}\) Western education made the intelligentsia intensely aware of the contrast between the prosperous industrialised West and poverty-stricken, famine-ravaged India. From Naoroji, Ranade, Digby, and above all Romesh Chandra Dutt’s two monumental volumes (published in 1901 and 1903), it learnt that this tragic contrast was no decree of blind fate, but the result of deliberate British policy. The foreign rulers had used “the arm of political injustice” to destroy the traditional handicrafts of India, thus creating the “present helpless dependence on agriculture”;\(^\text{17}\) the latter in its turn had been ruined by an

\(^{13}\) Amiya Kumar Bagchi, op. cit., pp. 229-32. 235-40.


\(^{16}\) Shambhuchandra Mukherji to Bholanath Chandra, 13 January 1873— in Monmothanath Ghosh, Manishi Bholanath Chandra (1924), p. 172.

\(^{17}\) R. C. Dutt, The Economic History of India under Early British Rule (Eighth impression, 1956)—Preface, p. viii. The first phrase was taken by Dutt from H. H. Wilson.
excessive land tax; and to all this had been added a crippling "drain of wealth" in the form of first 'investment' and later home charges, which India was meeting only through a harmful and deceptive export-surplus.\(^{18}\) India had thus been reduced to the status of supplier of raw materials and market for British manufactured goods; protection of what remained of the traditional crafts and a vigorous drive for industrialisation on modern lines were the obvious ways of ending this condition of dependence.

Dr Bipan Chandra has shown with a wealth of detail how the nationalist press in the last quarter of the nineteenth century adopted as its central economic thesis the need for industrialisation as the sovereign remedy for the growing poverty of India.\(^{10}\) It is true that down to 1905, this campaign tended to have a mendicant slant, with the government being urged through innumerable Congress resolutions to promote technical education, modify its stores purchase rules, reduce the burden of home charges and, above all, change its anti-Indian tariff policy. Yet appeals for self-help through swadeshi and boycott were also not uncommon. Bholanath Chandra in his famous essay "A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India", published in the \textit{Mukherji's Magazine} between 1873 and 1876, had appealed to his countrymen to consider industrialisation as "the ocean to the rivers of all their thoughts".\(^{20}\) He ended with a clear call for boycott to "dethrone King Cotton of Manchester".\(^{21}\) "It would be no crime for us to take the only but most effectual weapon of moral hostility, left us in our last extremity. Let us make use of this potent weapon by resolving to non-consume the goods of England..."\(^{22}\) In 1876 Akshoy-

\(^{18}\) These are three central themes of R. C. Dutt's prefaces to his two volumes—in fact they recur throughout his works.
\(^{10}\) Bipan Chandra, \textit{The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India} (1966), Chapters II, III.
\(^{20}\) \textit{Mukherji's Magazine}, Volume II (1873)—quoted in \textit{ibid}, p. 66.
\(^{21}\) Monnothanath Ghosh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 188, quoting from the second part of Bholanath Chandra's article.
\(^{22}\) \textit{Mukherji's Magazine}, Volume V (1876)—quoted in Bipan Chandra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 126.
chandra Sarkar's weekly Sadharani spoke of a group of Dacca youths who had taken a collective vow to abjure foreign cloth.23 The two classic instances of tariff injustice—the abolition of cotton import duties in 1882 and the imposition of the countervailing excise in 1896—both led to widespread calls for boycott, mainly in Bombay and Poona newspapers but also to some extent in Bengal.24 And though before 1905 boycott was usually considered as a means to remove economic grievances alone, a few suggestions for a more political use can also be traced—as for instance during the agitation against the Age of Consent Bill in the early '90s, when the Amrita Bazar Patrika anticipated a major feature of swadeshi propaganda with its story of alleged impurities in foreign salt.25 Fundamentally, then, the economic thought of the swadeshi age was not original, and the extremist leaders themselves, despite their contempt for other aspects of mendicant politics, handsomely acknowledged their debt to the moderates in this one respect.26 Yet swadeshi economics did have a flavour of its own, and contained nuances and elements at least relatively new.

There was first the very obvious fact of popularisation.

24 For a detailed account, see Bipan Chandra, op. cit., pp. 126-30.
25 In connection with a report on the impurities in English salt and sugar published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika of 19 August 1905, Calcutta Police Commissioner Halliday informed Carlyle (chief secretary, government of Bengal) on 26 August—"I understand that during the Age of Consent Bill the same hare was started by the Amrita Bazar Patrika", Home Public Progs Deposit, September 1905, n. 25.
26 "...it was Mr Naoroji who first forced the question of Indian poverty into prominence, and for this India owes him a debt of gratitude deeper than that due to any other of our older politicians dead or living"—"The Man of the Past and the Man of the Future", Rande Mataram, 26 December 1906 (an article otherwise devoted to proving the inferiority of Naoroji to Tilak, "the man of the future")—Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics (1964), p. 4. Cf. also the obituary of R. C. Dutt in Dharma (edited by Aurobindo), 20 Agrahayan 1316 (1909).
The themes of industrial devastation, economic drain, and the need for swadeshi and boycott were now heard everywhere—not only in formal treatises and newspaper articles, but also in songs and plays and ‘jatras’ and hosts of vernacular pamphlets.²⁷ Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar’s Desher Katha (Story of the Country)—an exposition in Bengali of the doctrines of Naoroji, Digby and Dutt—became immensely popular, running into four editions between June 1904 and October 1907, with 10,000 copies in all.²⁸ Popularisation naturally brought with it certain changes, in form as well as in content. Old arguments could not but acquire a new flavour when put in the form of a dialogue between swadeshi leader Ramesh Babu and peasant Gopi Ghosh,²⁹ or when combined with frank appeals to religious and caste prejudices which would have made the good Victorian liberal R. C. Dutt shudder.³⁰ Again, while the moderate economists had considered industrial revival to be just one item in a comprehensive programme of economic and political reform, the euphoria generated by the 1905 days produced a tendency for a time to consider swadeshi and boycott as a sort of panacea for all the ills of India. Boycott and swadeshi would “mutually stimulate” each other, the first creating a “sure market” for the second; the consequent gains of the artisan, entrepreneur and swadeshi merchant would mean “more money in the hands of the mercantile class and of investors in swadeshi companies and therefore more capital

²⁷ For a more detailed account of the communication media used in the swadeshi age, see below, Chapter VI.
²⁸ The Bengal Library Catalogue for the relevant years gives the following publication data for Desher Katha:
  1st edition, 16 June 1904, 1000 copies.
  3rd edition, 5 February 1906, 5000 copies.
²⁹ Charuchandra Basu Majumdar, Bartaman samashya o swadeshi andolan (November 1905).
available for investment in swadeshi manufacture”.

Such was “the naive extremist theory of a selfsustaining process of growth”.

British traders were buying increasing quantities of foodgrains and agricultural raw materials for export, thus allegedly forcing up prices and causing periodic famines; here, too, boycott was the solution, since the money for such purchases presumably came from the sale of foreign imports—and the reduction in the export-surplus might even throw out of gear the mechanism for the drain of wealth from India. But of course the leaders of extremism realised that all this was impossible without basic political changes—as a pamphlet brought out in the autumn of 1906 from the Yugantar press declared, the focus must be on the winning of freedom. So the emphasis shifted soon enough from constructive swadeshi to the new politics of passive resistance, of which economic boycott and the promotion of indigenous industries formed just a part and no more.

The employment-creating potential of industrialisation formed another major theme of swadeshi propaganda. The absolute volume of educated unemployment may have been exaggerated; the fact remains that very many in Bengal had come to feel that a faulty system of education combined with lack of industrial development had led to the services and the professions becoming seriously overcrowded. This is how Prafullachandra Ray explains the motives behind his setting-up of Bengal Chemicals—“Our educated young men, the moment they came out of their colleges,

31 “Graduated Boycott”—Bande Mataram, 26 April 1907. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 45.
34 Jogendranath Sarkar, Jatiya samashya (Printed at 41 Champa- tala 1st Lane, November 1906), pp. 11-13.
35 This at least is the conclusion of a careful official analysis of “The Economic Pressure on the Middle Classes” in 1915—Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 1913-14, Chapter IX.
were on the look out for a situation or a soft job under the Government..., or failing that in a European mercantile firm. The professions were becoming overcrowded. A few came out of the Engineering College, but they too were helpless seekers after jobs... What to do with all these young men?... How to bring bread to the mouths of the ill-fed, famished young men of the middle classes?" In November 1905, the school teacher Kaliprasanna Dasgupta in a militant speech calling for a boycott of examinations appealed to the students to take to the path of industry and commerce—there were far too many lawyers already, he declared (80 mukhtars in Madaripur subdivision alone), and government jobs were both scanty and degrading.37 In 1907 Dakshinaranjan Ghosh brought out an Industrial Guide as a kind of handbook for prospective entrepreneurs; in a preface he explains what led him to undertake this venture—‘I found myself unable to decide what to do with my younger brother who had just failed to graduate. Who can deny that there are many similarly situated at the present time?’38

The moderate economists had displayed an occasional nostalgia for the lost handicrafts of India, but their vision of the future was firmly modernist, seeking the solution of the poverty problem of our country in the rapid development of largescale factory industries.39 The really new element in

37 The text of this speech, delivered at the Field and Academy Club meeting of 10 Agrahayan 1312, is given in Kedarnath Dasgupta, Shikshar andolan (1905), Part III.
39 R. C. Dutt pointed to the virtues of artisan production—where “the individual man is at his best”, and declared: “every true Indian hopes that...something of the home industries will survive the assaults of capitalism” [The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age (1903, 1956), pp. 518-19]. In his presidential address at the first Indian Industrial Conference (December 1905), however, Dutt stated that a shift in emphasis from cottage crafts to urban industries was inevitable. [Report of the Indian Industrial Conference, Benares, 1905].—Cf. also Bipan Chandra, op. cit., 64-71, for the “near unanimity” with which the early nationalist leaders accepted industrial development on mo-
swadeshi thought was its partial repudiation of this western model, the beginnings of a cult of the handicraft, of the handloom and the charka (spinning-wheel)—anticipations, in fact, of much of Gandhian economics. Deuskar in his Desher Katha had estimated that the total replacement of the 216 crore yards annual import of Lancashire cloth by Indian mill cloth would require a capital investment of at least Rs 30 crores; but an expenditure of 2 crores, he declared, could set up 7 lakhs of improved fly-shuttle handlooms capable of turning out 126 crore yards of cloth. Such a policy would also provide employment for vast numbers, and be the salvation of the traditional weaving castes.\textsuperscript{40} Arguments of this type became very common in the swadeshi days; they had a natural appeal in Bengal, where the industrial impetus, as we have seen, came from patriotic sentiment and fear of unemployment rather than any considerable accumulation of capital. Handicrafts of certain types could also attract the educated bhadralok through their artistic qualities, once he had been weaned away from the fashion of aping the West.\textsuperscript{41} The prestige of the handloom was greatly enhanced by E. B. Havell’s crusade in its favour, and Pramanathan Bose had to court some unpopularity for his statement that “Handloom alone cannot be reasonably expected to drive the foreign produce from our markets, or even to make a very serious impression upon it.”\textsuperscript{42}

In purely economic terms, the handloom-powerloom controversy had little point, since in Indian conditions both were
dern lines to be the “panacea for all the economic ills of the country”—\textit{ibid}, p. 65.


\textsuperscript{41} Cf. \textit{Bharati}, Aswin 1312 [1905]—“‘Boycott’ ebang ‘swadeshiata’” [Boycott and Patriotism], an article by Pramanathan Chaudhuri which states that down to 1905 swadeshi had meant essentially the use of costly but artistic handmade goods by the educated minority.

\textsuperscript{42} “The Possibilities of Handloom Weaving in India”—quoted in Jogesh Chandra Bagal. \textit{Pramathanath Bose} (1955), p. 93. The \textit{Bengalee} of 1 April 1906 deplored the rather negative tone of this article, and emphasised the employment potential of handlooms.
evidently necessary and even in a sense interdependent. Despite the nineteenth century decline, handloom production in 1906 was estimated to be more than double the output of Indian mills; the latter were forging ahead in the 'coarse, medium' type of cloth, but could not yet turn out the finer varieties, while the powerloom was also found unsuitable for the production of cloth of the coarsest kind. Indian handlooms consumed about one-third of the yarn produced in the Bombay spinning mills, and thus it is not surprising to find the industrialist V. D. Thackersey earnestly advocating the use of the improved handloom popularised by Havell. The Bengalee campaigned for both Banga Lakshmi shares and the spread of the fly-shuttle handloom; the Amrita Bazar Patrika of 7 November 1905 wanted all possible sources of swadeshi supply to be explored—big weaving mills, small weaving factories, fly-shuttle looms; and a definite revival of handloom weaving was perhaps the most considerable achievement of swadeshi in Bengal.

43 At the Benares Indian Industrial Conference, R. B. Patel (director of Agriculture and Industries, Baroda state) presented the following statistics, admittedly no more than "probable estimates", but still highly interesting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLOTH SUPPLY (IN MILLIONS OF YARDS)</th>
<th>Indian handloom supply</th>
<th>Indian mill supply</th>
<th>Foreign imports</th>
<th>Total consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Coarse</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Coarse, Medium</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Medium</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fine</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>4750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— Quoted in G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 15.

44 V. D. Thackersey in a paper presented to the Industrial Conference (1905) estimated that out of a total production of 58 crore lbs of yarn by Indian spinning mills, 23½ crores were going to China, 13½ crores to weaving mills, 19 crores to handlooms, and 2 crores being made into rope and twine (Report of Indian Industrial Conference (1905), pp. 68-70).

45 See below.
'charka' was a much more dubious proposition, since here the indigenous tradition had been almost entirely uprooted.\footnote{Thus the once world-famous Dacca muslin could not be revived, as "The special yarn necessary for muslins used to be spun locally in Dacca, but this art is now completely forgotten, and all the yarn now used is machine-made" (G. N. Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11). Cf. also Gandhiji's account of his long and difficult search for the spinning wheel—\textit{The Story of My Experiments with Truth} (1927, 1963), Part V, Chapters 29-30.}

Much was written in its favour in the swadeshi days—the 'charka', it was argued quite in the Gandhian style, would provide employment for village women and widows,\footnote{Batakrishna Chattopadhyay, "Sekaler o ekaler charka" (The Charika of Yesterday and Today) — \textit{Nabyabharat}, Aagrahayan 1314 (1907). Another article—by Kartikchandra Dasgupta—suggested that young men should refuse to marry girls ignorant of spinning—"Shilponnotir ekti sahaj pantha" (An Easy Way of Developing Industry), \textit{Ibid}, Chaitra 1312 (1906). Articles suggesting improvements in the traditional charka were published in \textit{Prabasi}, Sravana 1313 (1906) and \textit{Swadeshi}, Asar, Bhadra 1313 (1906).} and it could also end the embarrassment of swadeshi handlooms depending for yarn of the finer counts on Lancashire imports.\footnote{Kartikchandra Dasgupta in the article cited above felt the charka to be indispensable, as the output of Indian spinning mills was inadequate and British yarn too expensive. The \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika} wrote in an editorial note of 1 November 1907—"We have urged again and again in these columns that so long we cannot spin our own thread, so long we cannot honestly say that we have abjured foreign cotton fabrics. And the charka is the best means for helping in this matter. The introduction of the charka has become essential in view of the fact that rotten and rejected stuff are being imported and sold to our simple-minded weavers... If every householder makes the thread required for clothing his family, then we can be independent of Manchester without practically any effort on our part."} A contemporary play ends with village women going back to the charka with gusto.\footnote{Amritalal Basu, \textit{Sabash bangali} (Bravo Bengalees). December 1905, p. 61. See also below for a more detailed account of this fascinating play.} In October 1906, the Rakhi-Bandhan appeal issued by the leaders included
the use of charka in the general swadeshi vow. But only Motilal Ghosh among the top leaders seems to have taken the ‘charka’ really seriously, and he was laughed out by V. D. Thackersey and other industrialists when he tried to raise the question at the subjects committee of the 1906 Industrial Conference. With the Chinese yarn market so uncertain, the Bombay industry had no reason to welcome a possible competitor; it would have liked the swadeshi agitators to concentrate on handlooms, serving—as Gandhi later put it—as “voluntary agents of the Indian spinning mills”. The later tolerance for khadi was probably a reflection of the new selfconfidence won by the industry through the war boom.

The controversy over the kind of industrial development suited to India was not a purely economic one; it involved from the beginning important social and ideological issues. By the turn of the century, Indian intellectuals were becoming increasingly aware of the social evils produced by largescale industry in the capitalist West—the two poles of

50 Bengalee, 9 October 1906.
52 D. R. Gadgil, op. cit., pp. 100-1.
53 M. K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 299.
54 Cf. the illuminating account by Gandhi of a conversation with a millowner during the early days of the khadi movement—op. cit., pp. 302-3. The millowner frankly recalled the way the industry had exploited the swadeshi movement—“We raised the prices of cloth, and did even worse thing”; with a booming home demand for Indian cloth, he told Gandhi, “we do not stand in need of more agents”—the question now was one of expanding production. Gandhi agreed that “Our mills will not be in want of custom for a long time to come. My work should be...to organise the production of handspun cloth...through it I can provide work to the semistarved semi-employed women of India...At any rate it can do no harm. On the contrary to the extent it can add to the cloth production of the country, be it ever so small, it will represent so much solid gain...” The millowner reiterated his scepticism, but declared that since Gandhi was thinking in terms of “additional production”, “I for one wish you every success”.

wealth and misery, class-conflict, the erosion of moral and aesthetic values in the rat-race for material success—and a search had begun for a peculiarly 'Indian' (or 'Asian') path which could preserve the virtues of traditional society even while solving the economic problems of the country. From 1898 onwards, the *Dawn* repeatedly warned against the uncritical transplantation of western industrialism, as so often in our orientalist tradition, the testimony of Europeans—Annie Besant, Nivedita, Havell—was frequently cited in support of this rejection of Europe. Much more startling is the reference to Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* as evidence of the horrors of the industrial revolution, made in Satischandra Mukherji's extremely interesting article entitled "The Indian Economic Problem" (*Dawn*, March-June 1900).

Satischandra felt that largescale industry produced two evils—exploitation by the capitalist minority, and "labour organisations on a gigantic scale... which would, as the days go by, be a serious political danger" (so much for

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75 *Dawn*, March 1898 (editor's note to an article by Annie Besant); July-August 1898 ("Aspects of Economic Life in England and India, Past and Present"—by the editor); October-December 1899 ("The Economic Situation in India and its Reaction on Indian Social Organisation"—editor); January 1900 ("Advanced Economic Thought in the West: How to Solve the Labour-Capital Problem"—editor).

76 Annie Besant wrote a serial in the *Dawn* of 1897-98 entitled "Is Spiritual Progress Inconsistent with Material Progress?" Nivedita's connection with the Dawn Society is well-known. The *Dawn* of February 1902 carried an article by E. B. Havell calling for the development of skilled handicrafts rather than machines.

77 "One has only to cast even a passing glance at the reports of the various commissions and blue books which investigated the state of industrial life in the factories, mines and workshops between 1833 and 1842; or to read the pages of Engels's *State of the Working Classes in England in 1844* to convince himself of the truth of the total degradation and suffering of the English working-classes brought on by the Industrial Revolution." *Dawn*, Volume III, p. 263. Bipan Chandra has already noted this early reference to the co-founder of Marxism—op. cit., p. 391.
Engels, then!).\(^5^8\) He visualised as a solution a kind of dual economy, with capitalist organisations only where these were absolutely indispensable (railways, mines, chemicals), while smallscale "individual family organisations" would be allowed and helped to flourish in all other sectors of the economy. Such a structure could be maintained in India "by giving material progress a place, but only a subordinate, though recognised, place in a progressive Hindu social organisation"—where wealth would be associated with social service, each class would have "a fixed, recognised and independent place in the social organism", and society would be regulated by what Satischandra liked to style a "higher culture".\(^5^9\)

Such ideas became fairly common after 1905, perhaps largely because they could be easily integrated with the general current of Hindu revivalism. A Bengalee correspondent deplored the starting of large mills, since these would inevitably produce "antagonism between the wage-earner and the capitalist".\(^6^0\) Men like Ranade had thought social reform a prerequisite for economic growth;\(^6^1\) now in the swadeshi period it had become fashionable to point to caste traditions and prejudices as factors which had helped to preserve indigenous crafts.\(^6^2\) One monthly in particular—the Swadeshi, edited by Jogindranath Chattopadhyay—came to embody the new attitudes most clearly. Strongly revivalist in tone, it repeatedly attacked western-style industrialisation, not sparing even the Banga Lakshmi project—"That the Serampore Mill has become the property of Bengalees is no doubt a matter for joy; but the less we have of textile mills,

\(^5^8\) *Dawn*, op. cit., p. 232.  
\(^6^0\) Letter of Kedarnath Roy—*Bengalee*, 19 October 1905.  
\(^6^1\) Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 83.  
\(^6^2\) "...to preserve and encourage Indian crafts and industries, and so to help to solve the great poverty problem in India, we ought to grow more national in habits, more orthodox in our tastes"—Anhodacharan Mitra, "How Hindu Orthodoxy Has Prevented from Dying and May Yet Revive Indian Arts and Industries"—*Dawn*, January 1902.
the better is it for the country.”68 “Machines enhance the suffering of the common people, and benefit only the rich handful. Independent professions are destroyed, labourers increase in numbers, become victims of drink and immorality, and are in time totally debased. Handicrafts provide food for everyone, preserve the freedom of all and produce worthy and religious men.”64 In politics this monthly was extremely moderate;65 thus the new attitudes were no extremist monopoly.

It is tempting to see in such aspects of swadeshi thought evidence of a petty-bourgeois opposition to the growth of big capital, a kind of Indian variant in fact of the small-producers’ utopia which has haunted European radical thought from Rousseau and the Jacobins through much of anarchism down to the Narodniks of Russia.68 What is missing here, however, is the generous vision of human equality and brotherhood, the exaltation of physical labour and the agony of the intellectual alienated from that ‘natural’ life. The caste-ridden imagination of the neotraditionalist Hindu bhadrakal found solace rather in the dream of a stratified society with provision explicitly made for the “maintenance or support of higher classes of workers devoted to the discovery or spread of truths”67—a Brahmin aristo-

63 “Swadeshi andolaner phal”, Swadeshi, Sravana 1313 (1906).
64 Bireswar Pare, “Bartaman swadeshi andolan”, Ibid, Phalgun 1313 (1906).
65 Thus it condemned excesses by students, and—even after the Barisal conference—wanted to separate swadeshi from the political movement, “so that the government is not irritated”—Swadeshi, Phalgun 1312, Asar 1313 (1906).
66 The Soviet historian N. M. Goldberg has drawn the Narodnik parallel in his analysis of extremism as a “petty-bourgeois democratic” movement—Reisner and Goldberg, Tilak and the Struggle for Indian Freedom (1966), pp. 34-36. Amales Tripathi also compares extremism with the Russian Slavophil movement—op. cit., p. 18.
67 Satischandra Mukherji, “The Indian Economic Problem”—Dawn, Volume III, p. 264. Rabindranath during his shortlived ‘traditionalist’ phase talked in similar terms of functional specialisation through the caste system, with Brahmans once again becoming disinterested intellectual leaders—Brahman (1902)—R.R. IV. The Bande Mataram
cracy of the intellect exempt as always from manual toil. Rejection of the West out of nationalist motives, rather than a genuine awareness of the evils of emergent industrial society or any passionate concern for that matter about the sufferings of the downtrodden in general—such seems to have been a dominant feature of swadeshi economic thought.

II. SWADESHI ENTERPRISE

With the possible exception of Rammohun’s friend Dwarkanath Tagore, Bengali entrepreneurs of the first half of the nineteenth century do not seem to have been inspired by any conscious nationalist sentiment. The traditional business castes, carrying on as modest compradores after the big names dropped out following the Union Bank fiasco, were also not distinguished by much patriotic consciousness—as not untypical examples may be cited the Shaha merchants of Barisal, dealers in foreign cloth who had to be subjected to intense ‘social boycott’ in the swadeshi days.68 The Roys of Bhagyakul, who developed a flourishing trade in rice and jute during the last quarter of the century, and were the chief organisers of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce in 1887,69 actively campaigned against the partition in its earlier stages (allegedly because the development of Chittagong port would hurt their Hatkhola mart in Calcutta)70—but their connections with nationalism were otherwise extremely tenuous. Ideology likewise play:

combined democratic and even socialistic talk with frank praise of caste—which “had the true socialistic aim of keeping awake in every class of the society a sense of duty to it... they soften the keenness of the struggle for existence by a judicious and workable system of division of labour”—“Liberty and Our Social Laws” (editorial), 17 September 1907.

68 Cf. below.


ed little or no part in the timid and modest entry of Indian capital into tea plantations and coal mines.71

If swadeshi be defined as indigenous enterprise motivated primarily by conscious patriotism, its beginnings must be sought rather in the sporadic and often somewhat quixotic efforts of some members of two elite family-groups during the '70s and '80s of the last century. The Tagores of Jorasanko had become pure rentiers, so far as their stable income was concerned, after 1847, but patriotic considerations led several members of this unique family into swadeshi adventures. Dwijendranath and Ganendranath Tagore helped Nabagopal Mitra in starting the Chaitra or Hindu Mela in 1867, with exhibitions of indigenous crafts as one of its principal features.72 In the mid-'70s the secret society called Sanjibani Sabha, started by Jyotirindranath Tagore with Rajnara-yan Bose as president and teen-aged Rabindranath an enthusiastic member, tried to set up a match-workshop and a weaving concern. The matches refused to light and the loom expired after manufacturing a solitary towel.73 After trying his hand for a short while with jute trading in Hatkhola (with Janakinath Ghoshal, the father of Sarala Debi and future Congress secretary, as partner) and indigo-cultivation at Shilaidaha, Jyotirindranath launched a major venture in 1884 with his Inland River Steam Navigation Service. Rabindranath has left an affectionate and moving account of what followed.74 Five ships75 were bought at enormous cost, to

71 In 1895 there were 11 Indian-owned tea concerns—out of a total of 182 (Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, op. cit., p. 35). Their number had gone up to 15—8 in Jalpaiguri and 7 in Silchar—by 1908 (G. N. Gupta, op. cit.). Indian enterprise was more prominent in coal, with 40 mines in Burdwan division and 62 in Chota Nagpur division in 1897—but most of these were small pits (Sunil Kumar Sen, Studies..., p. 34).
72 Sahitya-sadhak-charitmala, Volume VI, Nos. 66. 71.
carry passengers between Khulna and Barisal and cargo up to Calcutta; but soon Jyotirindranath had to face a cut-throat competition from the Flotilla Company, a British-owned concern. Barisal students took up the cause of the swadeshi company with great enthusiasm, composing songs in its honour and recruiting passengers for it. But events proved—as they were to do so often later on—that patriotic sentiment among the intelligentsia was no substitute for solid capital resources. The rate-war led to passengers enjoying virtually free rides (with free meals to boot), an accident at the Howrah Bridge proved the final blow, and Jyotirindranath’s shipping concern was ruined, Raja Peary Mukherji of Uttarpara buying up the assets as agent for the Flotilla Company.

Interest in business ventures was also displayed by some of the Young Brahmos—militant social reformers and the organisers of the Indian Association—and in particular by the group centring round Anandamohan Bose. Anandamohan bought a tea-plantation in Tezpur, and together with his father-in-law Bhagabanchandra Basu (the father of the scientist Jagadischandra) tried to set up a bank in the 1880s.76 Surendranath Banerji, Anandamohan Bose and Narendranath Sen were honorary members of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce from the year of its foundation, and the constitution of the chamber was drafted by Hume and revised by Wedderburn.77

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, economic swadeshi was shedding its sporadic character and gradually developing into something like a real movement. Here too 1905 obviously was a watershed, but the continuities are sufficiently clear to warrant us taking the twenty years from 1890 to 1910 as a single period. Five strands may be distinguished

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77 Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 73.
within the swadeshi economic activity of these two decades —organisation of technical education and something like industrial research; the promotion of swadeshi sales through exhibitions, shops and cost-price hawking by volunteers; the fostering and revival of the traditional indigenous crafts; the starting of new industries based on modern techniques (as well as one or two experiments in scientific agriculture); and the floating of swadeshi banks, insurance companies and inland shipping concerns.

The movement for technical education in Bengal had been inaugurated by Pramathanath Bose’s pamphlet, published in 1886.\(^{78}\) pleading for a proper science curriculum in the university syllabus, a separate Science and Technological Institute, and a ‘Society for the Development of Indian Industries’. Technical education, Bose declared, was the essential prerequisite for the starting of what he termed the “science-industries”—textiles, dyeing, tannery, sugar-refining, soap and glass manufacturing, mining and metallurgy, etc.\(^{79}\) Five years later Pramathanath presided over a meeting of the Bengal Provincial Conference delegates which set up an Indian Industrial Association.\(^{80}\) The principal members of this Association were Pramathanath himself, pioneer geologist and son-in-law of R. C. Dutt, Parbatisankar Chaudhuri, the zamindar of Teota, and Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay, a government official who published a number of monographs on the indigenous crafts of Bengal. The Association arranged popular lectures, as for instance, by Pramathanath Bose on the coal industry and Trailokyanath on fibres which could be prepared from certain Bengal plants. Its members

\(^{78}\) *Technical and Scientific Education in Bengal* (October 1886). A description of this pamphlet is given in Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-68.

\(^{79}\) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

\(^{80}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69, Dinanath Gangopadhyay, “Bange swadesh-jata drabya hyabaharer cheshta” (Efforts to Use Indigenous Articles in Bengal), *Nabynabharat*, Paus 1312 (1905). The Association was set up in October 1891 at a meeting at the British Indian Association office; Pramathanath became its first honorary secretary.
experimented with indigenous raw materials, with Parbati-
sankar trying to manufacture tar and ink from the peat de-
posits in his zamindari. It also organised exhibitions, till the
Congress took up this work as a regular feature of its annual
sessions from 1901. The Association, however, seems to
have become more or less inactive and unimportant by 1905,
though there are a few references to formal annual meet-
ings. Its role as a forum for discussions on industrial matters
was taken over by the Indian Industrial Conference, which
became a regular feature of the annual Congress sessions
from 1905 onwards.

Much more important and successful than the 1891 society
was the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and
Industrial Education of Indians, founded in March 1904 by
Jogendrachandra Ghosh, the lawyer-son of Justice Chandra-
madhab. The idea—apparently first suggested by Ramakanta
Roy after his return from Japan—was to raise a fund through
donations and mass collections to provide scholarships for
Indian youths going abroad for technical training. The origi-
nal target was one lakh rupees a year, of which Rs 35,000
was to be spent on foreign scholarships, Rs 40,000 given as
loans to the Indian experts returning from abroad to help
them start new industries, and Rs 25,000 expended on a
central laboratory for private college students in Calcutta.
The Association got the patronage of some Europeans—Sir

81 The above account is based on Dinanath Gangopadhyay, op. cit.
82 Bengalee, 27 March 1907, 22 January 1908.
83 A total of 76 papers were presented to the Indian Industrial Con-
fere nces between 1905 and 1908. The resolutions adopted, however,
were politically speaking uniformly moderate and even mendicant in:
outlook; the Conference, dominated by hardheaded Western Indian
businessmen, never adequately reflected the more militant swadeshi
spirit then sweeping Bengal. Cf. Report of Indian Industrial Conference,
1905-1908.
84 Weekly Chronicle, 19 January 1904—RNP(B) for week ending
30 January 1904.
85 Report by President Narendranath Sen to the Central Council of
the Association, 10 February 1905. Industrial India, February 1905. The
laboratory scheme, however, seems to have remained entirely on paper.
Daniel Hamilton provided several free passages through the British India Steam Navigation Company, while lieutenant-governor Fraser attended a Town Hall send-off for the students going abroad—and the office-bearers were mostly moderates of unimpeachable respectability. At the same time the Association, particularly during its first years, counted among its most enthusiastic workers a number of young barristers who soon were to become prominent in the extremist movement—A. C. Banerji, A. K. Ghosh, B. M. Chatterji, C. R. Das, S. K. Mullick. Particularly active during 1904 was A. C. Banerji, assistant secretary of the Association, addressing meetings in Dacca, Narayangunj and Midnapur in April, Ranaghat, Krishnagore and Comilla in June, and Nabadwip in August.

In sharp contrast to the 1891 Association, never anything more than a small club of intellectuals with industrial inclinations, J. C. Ghosh’s society with its four-anna mass membership soon caught the imagination of educated Bengal. Within a year, forty-eight district committees had been set up. A contemporary diary records the decision of the school committee of a Vikrampur village “to raise the school-fee of each student by a farthing per mensum in aid of the newly-established Industrial and Scientific Association in Cal-

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57 Bengalee, 6 March 1906.
58 Thus in 1904-5 the Association had Narendranath Sen as president, and Pearymohun Mukherji, Rashbehari Ghosh and Surendranath Banerji as vice-presidents. Bengalee, 14 July 1905. Jogendrachandra Ghosh himself got into hot water with the nationalists later on by standing for election to the Bengal Legislative Council during the boycott days—Ibid, 2 December 1906.
59 Along with Bepin Pal and Bhubanmohan Sengupta, these were the men singled out for ‘special thanks’ by Narendranath Sen in February 1905 for having toured the districts on behalf of the Association
51 Industrial India, February 1905.
50 Press-cuttings from Bengalee and Indian Mirror, preserved among the Private Papers of Aswinicoomar Banerji.
51 Industrial India, loc. cit.
cutta". More than a thousand members and numerous village branches were reported from Barisal, and there is an unexpected reference to the Association in an otherwise mendicant play about the partition. An incidental effect of the movement was a relaxation in the orthodox ban on sea-voyages—in March 1906, 44 students going abroad on Association scholarships were actually given a reception at the Kalighat temple. The society even got a promise of life long service from an unnamed "Bengalee sanyasi".

In April 1908, the fifth annual meeting of the Association was informed that scholarships awarded annually during the four years of the society’s life had numbered 17, 44, 96 and 79. Of the 1906-7 scholarships, 48 were for the USA, 36 for Japan, 13 for Britain, and 2 for France; the recipients included two Muslims, two Assamese and one each from Bihar and Orissa. A number of industries were set up in course of time by students who had been trained abroad under Association scholarships. Satyasundar Deb became the principal architect of the Calcutta Pottery Works, A. P. Ghosh and P. C. Ray helped to

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92 Unpublished Diary of Gyanchandra Banerji, 29 October 1904.
94 Amarendranath Dutta, Banger angacchd ba—The Partition of Bengal (August 1905), Scene I, pp. 2-3.
95 Bengalee, 6 March 1906. Both A. C. Banerji and Narendranath Sen emphasised this happy link between industrial advancement and social reform—Indian Mirror, 4 August 1904; Bengalee, 2 April 1907.
96 "The bearer of this letter is a Bengalee sanyasi who wishes to devote his life to the service of our Association. He is a man of business and keeps accounts well, having been in responsible posts on the EIR. He is a man of ideas also. Kindly consult with him about the mode of work and utilise him as much as you can..."—Jogendrachandra Ghosh to Aswinicoomar Banerji, Deoghar, 13 November 1904, Private Papers of Aswinicoomar Banerji.
97 Bengalee, 14 April 1908.
98 Ibid, 2 April 1907. Apparently three among those obtaining scholarships did not eventually make the trip—hence the discrepancy between the 1907 and 1908 reports.
99 Ibid
start a match factory.\textsuperscript{100} K. C. Das and R. N. Sen founded the Calcutta Chemicals, S. M. Bose was associated with the Bengal Waterproof Company.\textsuperscript{101} The Association during the swadeshi days also set up a Small Industries Development Company with a capital of two lakhs, and an agricultural estate at Deoghar.\textsuperscript{102} Its work seems to have suffered, however, as politics of the new and exciting variety came to engross the attention of many of its earlier activists. The receipts for 1907-8 totalled only Rs 49,887, and J. C. Ghosh in a letter unfortunately undated complained bitterly to A. C. Banerji—"Now my health having broken down, unless some of you take up the work all is lost... Kindly try to collect the subscriptions for (sic) the pleaders and the barristers... This is the result of leaving everything to one man and enjoying yourself with tamashas, bonfires and speeches on swadeshi and all such futile nonsense."\textsuperscript{103} Technical education in the meantime had of course been taken up in earnest by both the Bengal National College and the Bengal Technical Institute.\textsuperscript{104}

The Hindu Mela tradition of holding periodic exhibitions of swadeshi products was revived by the Industrial Association from 1893 onwards, and its 1895 exhibition is said to have attracted 20,000 visitors.\textsuperscript{105} After 1901, such displays became a regular part of Congress annual sessions. The 1906 Congress Exhibition was planned on a particularly ambitious scale, though its organiser Jogeshchandra Chaudhuri burnt his fingers badly by making Reuters its sole advertising agents and inviting Minto to open it.\textsuperscript{106} Numerous local exhibitions

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Acharya P. C. Ray Centenary Volume, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{102} Bengalee, 5 August 1906, 14 April 1908. For more details, see below
\textsuperscript{103} Private Papers of Aswinicoomar Banerji.
\textsuperscript{104} For the role of technical education in the National Education movement, see below, Chapter IV.
\textsuperscript{105} Dinanath Gangopadhyay, op. cit., Nabyabharat, Paus 1312 (1903).
\textsuperscript{106} Bengalee, 16 December, 22 December 1906. The extremists called for a boycott of the exhibition, and the Bande Mataram of 2 March 1907 claimed that it closed after two and a half months with a deficit.
were also organised in the swadeshi days, as for instance the "Deshi Dhutie Hat" at Uttarpara set up by the "public spirited young zamindar" Rajendranath Mukherji in September 1905,\textsuperscript{107} a mobile exhibition of everyday necessities of indigenous origin at Serampore in the same month,\textsuperscript{108} and a swadeshi mela complete with a women's section organised by the Mojilpur-Jaynagar Hitaishini Sabha in March 1907.\textsuperscript{109} The Mahila Silpa Samiti (Ladies' Industrial Society) founded by Hiranmoyee Debi organised 'Mahila Swadeshi Melas' in Calcutta in October 1906 and March 1908.\textsuperscript{110} The annual swadeshi mela instituted by Krishnakumar Mitra and Sachindraprasad Basu on their return from exile, and kept up for a few years even after the abrogation of the partition, represented a kind of last flicker of the 1905 spirit in Bengal.\textsuperscript{111}

Efforts to establish a regular swadeshi sales machinery—as distinct from occasional exhibitions—began in 1891 with a Swadeshi Emporium started by Nilambar Mukherji, Bireswar Chatterji, Akshoychandra Sarkar and the Bangabasi staff. This lasted for about a year, and is said to have obtained the support of Peary Mukherji of Uttarpara, Romeshchandra Mitter and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. In 1897 Rabindranath set up a shortlived Swadeshi Bhandar at 82 Harrison Road.\textsuperscript{112} In 1903 his niece Sarala Ghoshal founded the Lakshmir Bhandar.\textsuperscript{113} Apart from such amateur ventures, Calcutta had by 1905 two major concerns dealing with swadeshi goods (mainly mill-cloth from Bombay and Ahmedabad): Kunjabihari Sen's shop in Bunnabazar, and the Indian Stores founded in 1902 and housed at 62 Bowbazar Street—the headquarters of

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}, 7 September 1905.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Bengalee}, 28 September 1905.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Swaraj}, 3 Chaitra 1313 (March 1907).

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Bengalee}, 1 September 1906, 23 November 1906, 21 March 1908.

\textsuperscript{111} Unpublished Diary of Sukumar Mitra, entries for 7-17 August 1911. \textit{Sajibani}, 5 Bhaadra 1320 (1913).

\textsuperscript{112} A description of these early swadeshi ventures is given in the Report on the Agitation against the Partition of Bengal, Government of Bengal to Government of India (Home), No. 205 B, 25 January 1906, paras 32-36—Home Public Progs A, June 1906, n. 175.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Dawn}, April 1903.
the Indian Association. The latter had a capital of five lakhs, divided into 5,000 shares; its secretary-cum-managing-director was Jogeshchandra Chaudhuri, and the other directors included Surjayakanta Acharyya Chaudhuri, Manindra Nandi, Sitanath Roy, R. N. Mukherji and Bhupendranath Bose.  

The Industrial Section of the Dawn Society, established by Kiranchandra Basu in June 1903, was supervised by J. Chaudhuri and K. B. Sen and functioned mainly as a retail agent (on an one-anna-per-rupee profit basis) for the two big concerns, selling about Rs 10,000 worth of home-made goods during its first year. Among other indigenous trading concerns, established before 1905 and usually combining sale of imported articles with manufacture of one or two varieties of consumer goods, mention may be made of Buttokristo Paul (chemists), C. K. Sen and H. Bose (famous for their Jabakusum and Kuntalin hair-oils, the latter also importing phonograph records and cycles), and Carr and Mahalanobis (dealers in sports goods).

1905 brought a sudden expansion in the market, and new shops sprang up overnight—the United Bengal Company of the Muslim swadeshi leader Guznavi in Bowbazar, Swadeshi Bazar on Cornwallis Street, Swadeshi Bastralay on Chitpur Road, the Chhatra Bhandar of the revolutionaries, and very many others both in Calcutta and in district towns. K. B. Sen’s sold eight months’ stock in a fortnight; the Indian Stores sales figures shot up by three lakh rupees compared to 1904, the proceeds in 1905 amounting to Rs 464,738-5-10 at the head office and Rs 97,680-3-0 for the Burrabazar branch. There was a profit of Rs 14,737-1-0, and a 6 per cent dividend was declared in August 1906—and all this despite the fact that, as J. Chaudhuri somewhat sanc-

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114 Prospectus of the Indian Stores—Enclosure J, Home Public Progs A. June 1906, n. 175.
116 Advertisement in Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1 February 1906.
117 Swadeshi, Kartik 1312 (1905).
118 Bengalee, 20 August 1905.
timoniously declared, his firm had scrupulously refused to raise prices during the 1905 boom, selling dhuties at Rs 1-13 while elsewhere it had gone up to Rs 2-5.\(^{119}\) Such abstinence, indeed, was extremely rare, and from as early as August 1905 nationalist newspapers had to frequently deplore profiteering in swadeshi—the forcing up of prices in the sellers’ market created by the boycott, the sale of shoddy articles, even the palming-off of foreign goods with the trade marks removed as swadeshi.\(^{120}\) In Calcutta the chief culprit was Kunjabihari Sen,\(^{121}\) and in the districts, too, while Nivedita might optimistically call for the capture “of the small shops by the swadeshi”,\(^{122}\) a more practical-minded correspondent from Dinajpur had already pointed out that most of the mufassil swadeshi shops were not being started out of patriotic feelings alone.\(^{123}\)

The nationalist movement sought to check the swadeshi profiteers through cost-price hawking by volunteers. The Anti-Circular Society set an example through its supply department, established on 9 December 1905, and many of the samitis tried to follow suit during the succeeding two or three years. Thus in May 1906 a correspondent of the Bengalee praised the work of the students of Bally, who had hawked Rs 700 worth of swadeshi goods at cost price in the course of a fortnight.\(^{124}\) The accounts of the Anti-Circular Society’s Supply Department (which had set up 75 branches in the mufassil) during its first year make interesting and impressive reading:

\(^{119}\) Ibid, 1 September 1906.

\(^{120}\) Amrita Bazar Patrika, 29 August, 22 September 1905. Bengalee, 9 September, 21 September, 22 September, 23 September, 30 September 1905.

\(^{121}\) Amrita Bazar Patrika, 29 August 1905. Home Public Progs A, June 1906, n. 175, op. cit.

\(^{122}\) Nivedita’s article on the swadeshi movement in the Indian Review, reprinted in Bengalee, 4 April 1906.

\(^{123}\) Lalitchandra Sen in Amrita Bazar Patrika, 30 September 1905.

\(^{124}\) Bengalee, 18 May 1906.
The figures with their sharp ups and downs and obviously\textsuperscript{125} close connection with the tempo of the general political movement (e.g. the dramatic rise after the Barisal conference of April 1906) indicate also the inevitably sporadic nature of such volunteer activity. What is more important, cost-price hawking could at best curb profiteering by retailers; the million-owners of Bombay and Ahmedabad still went on making superprofits out of the patriotism of their fellow-countrymen. In the latter half of 1905, with the China and the home markets “in a particularly favourable condition”, the working day in the Bombay mills was forced up for a time to a fantastic 15 hours.\textsuperscript{126} The extent of exploitation may be gauged from a contemporary estimate of the profits of the Bombay industry at Rs 3.25 crores in 1906; the wage-bill for the same year came to only Rs 1.68 crores.\textsuperscript{127} In 1906-7, when Japanese competition threatened the Chinese yarn market, the enhanced demand for piecegoods created by swa-

\textsuperscript{125} Annual Report of the Anti-Circular Society, Bengalee, 10 November 1906.


\textsuperscript{127} Dawn and Dawn Society’s Magazine, May 1908.
deshi helped to stave off a slump. Occasional timid complaints by Bengal nationalists about the quality and price of Bombay and Ahmedabad cloth were brushed aside. Ambalal Desai bluntly declared that high prices were inevitable, and "business and philanthropy make uncongenial friends".

If swadeshi was to become a viable proposition in Bengal, the development of new productive capacity was the obvious prerequisite. This took two forms—the revival of traditional handicrafts, and the starting of modern industries.

Among handicrafts, cotton weaving naturally received the most attention. From 1902 onwards, E. B. Havell had been trying to popularise the fly-shuttle loom, invented by Kay a hundred and fifty years before but as yet in use in Bengal only in the Chandernagore and Serampore regions. Numerous pamphlets were written on the subject in the swadeshi days—about a dozen during 1905-6. The Bengal Landholders' Association planned to supply fly-shuttle looms to weavers and a number of schools were set up by the nationalists to teach bhadralok youths the art of handloom weaving. The National Fund trustees allocated Rs 10,000 to start a weaving school in December 1905 at the Sangit Samaj premises (209 Cornwallis Street) with 60 students and 21 fly-shuttle looms, and a further Rs 800 for the centre.

129 Thus the Amrita Bazar Patrika of 6 January 1906 stated that the 20,000 bales sold to Bengal by Ahmedabad were "of very inferior quality".
130 "Economic Swadeshiism—An Analysis"—Modern Review, February 1907. The role of the Bombay industrialists in the swadeshi days has been analysed in a recent article by A. P. Kannangara—"Indian Millowners and Indian Nationalism", Past and Present, No. 40 (July 1968).
133 Bengalee, 10 September 1905.
established by Dr P. K. Acharyya at Kishoregunj.\textsuperscript{134} Havell organised a training centre for the fly-shuttle at Serampore;\textsuperscript{135} the Bande Mataram Sampraday had a school of its own at 121/1 Cornwallis Street and later at Talla;\textsuperscript{136} and similar centres are reported from Mymensingh, Tangail (set up by Guznavi), Serajgunj, Barisal and Shilaidaha (established at Rabindranath’s initiative).\textsuperscript{137}

The net impact of these efforts was rather disappointing. The National Fund weaving school, Krishnakumar Mitra tells us, collapsed within a few months with a dead loss of Rs 30,000.\textsuperscript{138} Bhadralok youths trained in such centres all too soon tended to lose interest in the matter, and the fly-shuttle was probably too expensive for the ordinary weaver—Cumming noted in 1908 that it was not much in evidence except in parts of Jessore, Howrah, Sadar and Serampore subdivisions of Hooghly, and the Ranigunj area.\textsuperscript{139} But the new demand created by swadeshi did provide a very important stimulus to handloom weaving. Reported to be steadily declining in all previous surveys, “by 1906-07, the industry had recovered”, and Cumming even speaks of “a revolution for the time being... made in the industry by the new factor of an increased local demand”. A 50 per cent rise over the previous year was reported in 1906-7 from Burdwan district, an export trade from Bankura, and “considerable manufacture” at Bolpur in Birbhum district; in Arambagh subdivision of Hooghly production had risen “from 11 lakhs to 14 lakhs”; Ghatal was the main centre in Midnapore, Basirhat in the 24-Parganas; coarse cloths, bedsheets and towels were being

\textsuperscript{134} Amrita Bazar Patrika, 10 February 1906.
\textsuperscript{137} Bengalee, 20 October 1905, 21 November 1905, 6 March 1906. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12 December 1905, 6 February 1906.
\textsuperscript{138} Krishnakumar Mitra, Atmacharit (1937), pp. 258-59.
\textsuperscript{139} J. G. Cumming, op. cit., p. 8. In East Bengal the fly-shuttle was to be found only in Barisal, Faridpur and Comilla—G. N. Gupta, A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam for 1907-08 (1908), p. 14.
made at Kushtia, Meherpur and Shikarpur in Nadia, and fine cloth for export at Santipur; and progress was being made also in Jessore and Khulna. Similar reports came from East Bengal—"It looks, however, as if the downward course taken by this, the most important indigenous industry of the province, has at last been checked and a slow but perceptible improvement is visible everywhere." The revival was most noticeable in Noakhali, Comilla (where the export figure mounted from a lakh to a lakh and a half rupees), Pabna and Faridpur districts.

Yet if the achievements were considerable, certain major problems remained. Country cloth, admittedly somewhat more lasting than imported piecegoods, was still more than twice as expensive, and there was also the factor of middlemen-cum-moneylender domination—"quite 75 per cent of the weavers are dependent on mahajans" and their earnings averaged less than Rs 8 a month. "Enterprising shopkeepers and wholesale dealers in country-made cloth" consequently were the main beneficiaries from swadeshi, as for instance in the new province the firm of Saraswati and Co in Gauhati, and Saranath in Comilla. G. N. Gupta found little or no "marked improvement in the material condition of the weaver", and explained the rather surprising absence of Dacca from the list of districts where the handloom was advancing by "the fact that only one anna of the weavers of the Dacca town are free from the clutches of the mahajans". It is interesting and significant that swadeshi made no attempt at

141 G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 9.
142 Ibid, pp. 10-11.
143 "The contrast is shortly as follows: Country cloth will last over a year, and imported cloth 7-8 months. The cost of the latter is Rs 0-11 to Rs 1-3, of the former Rs 1-12 to Rs 3-0." J. G. Cumming, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
144 Even the agricultural labourer got more—from Rs 8 to Rs 15. G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 14.
145 Ibid. Compare the views of J. G. Cumming—"The financiers of the cotton weavers are as a rule not master weavers and have not improved the craft in the slightest." Op. cit., p. 11.
all to break this stranglehold on the artisans—we never hear of efforts to organise artisan cooperatives, for instance. There was also the further limitation that the yarn used by the Bengal weaver came from Bombay spinning mills and the finer counts often from Lancashire. Efforts to revive the charka as yet bore little fruit, though we do hear of one or two exhibitions of hand-spun yarn—as at Munshigunj in November 1906 and Barisal in March 1908.\textsuperscript{148}

Swadeshi stimulated a partial revival in silk-weaving in its traditional centres of Murshidabad and Malda. Cumming noted that the silk-weavers, organised under influential headmen, were generally more prosperous than their mahajan-ridden brethren in the cotton industry.\textsuperscript{147} The market for brass and bell-metal ware (with its main production centre in North Midnapur) expanded, swadeshi producing a sentiment among the bhadralok "that every Hindu who can afford it should purchase" such utensils in preference to imported enameled goods; but the high price of copper was an adverse factor, and the cheaper foreign substitute remained popular among the poor.\textsuperscript{148} The cutlery of Kanchannagore (Burdwan) found a ready market "in most swadeshi shops in Bengal", and there were other centres at Duttapara in Noakhali and Uzirpur in Barisal.\textsuperscript{149} Use of swadeshi nibs became a point of honour, and not unfrequently a real test of patriotism, too, due to their atrocious quality.\textsuperscript{150} The first two years of the movement saw such nibs being turned out in large quantities in Pabna, Patuakhali, Rangpur and Barisal, but by 1908 manufacture was reported only from Uzirpur in Bakargunj district.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{149} Bengalee, 10 November 1906. Daily Hitabadi, 25 March 1908 (RNP (B) for week ending 28 March 1908).
\textsuperscript{147} J. G. Cumming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11; G. N. Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{145} J. G. Cumming, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 6, 24.
\textsuperscript{149} G. N. Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{150} Thus a naib of the Gauripur estate in a letter to his employer from Sunamgunj described himself as writing "with great difficulty, with a bad, old and worn-out swadeshi nib". Home Political Progs A, February 1908, n. 102.
\textsuperscript{151} G. N. Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 44.
Among modern industries, the first and in many ways the most remarkable of all was the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, founded by the great scientist and patriot Prafullachandra Ray in 1893. Acharya Prafullachandra started with a small sulphuric acid plant bought from a fellow-villager in Sodepur (near Calcutta). The drugs produced from indigenous materials included Ayurvedic items as well as standard British pharmacopoeia preparations. Patriotic-minded distributors like Buttokristo Paul and doctors like Radhagobinda Kar and Nilratan Sircar helped to popularise the indigenous drugs and acids. The Sodepur plant was eventually scrapped, but in April 1901 Prafullachandra converted his business into a limited liability concern, and a few years later a proper factory was erected at 82 Maniktala Main Road. Rajshekhar Basu becoming the manager in 1904. The manufacture of laboratory apparatus and perfumes was also taken in hand. The company’s sales rose from Rs 23,371 in 1901 to Rs 3 lakhs in 1910; the capital—originally two lakhs—had doubled by 1915. In 1908 Cumming hailed the enterprise as “an object lesson to capitalists in this province”, but noted the high price of imported industrial alcohol to be a negative factor. The first world war provided a major new stimulus, and the number of workers employed, only 70 in 1908, had mounted to 1400 in 1926—by which time the Works had shifted to their present site at Panihati.\(^{152}\)

Cumming mentioned “the manufacture of white porcelain from kaolin” at the Calcutta Pottery Works to be the only other really “good example in Calcutta of successful indigenous enterprise”\(^{153}\). China-clay had been discovered in 1901 at Mangalhat near Rajmahal, and a private company to exploit it was started by Maharaja Manindra Nandi of Kassium-bazar and Baikunthanath and Hemchandra Sen of Berham-pore. The first efforts were unsuccessful, but the return of


Satyasundar Deb from Japan with training in ceramics in 1906 proved the turning point. A modern factory with up-to-date German and English machinery was set up at 45 Tangra Road, and soon the firm was advertising “swadeshi teacups, saucers, teapots, a real novelty”\(^{154}\)—as well as inkpots, insulators and dolls, and even entering the foreign market.\(^{155}\) The Bengalee of 12 October 1906 stated the capital of the Calcutta Pottery Works to be Rs 2 lakhs. “The chief thing”, reported Cumming, “is that Mr Deb has succeeded in producing a glaze”—the traditional pottery in Bengal had been entirely of the plain unglazed terracotta variety.\(^{156}\) Two Japanese experts helped to achieve further technical improvements during 1909-10, but the growing influx of cheap German and Japanese articles remained a serious problem.\(^{157}\) There were two other ventures in kaolin in the swadeshi period which were much less successful—the Bengal Pottery Works at Baranagore under Satyacharan Bose with six inadequately trained workmen and a paid-up capital of only Rs 5,000, and the Eureka Porcelain Works of Giridih set up by M. N. Dutta and Justice Sharfuddin.\(^{158}\) The latter had five Muslim and three Hindu directors.\(^{159}\)

The swadeshi project launched with the greatest fanfare was of course the Banga Lakshmi Cotton Mills. The prospectus issued in the first months of 1906 called for a capital of Rs 12 lakhs to be raised through shares of Rs 100 each; the directors included a number of Bengal’s leading zamindars and businessmen, and the appeal for subscriptions was backed up by the top nationalist politicians. A slight anticlimax was involved, however, in the fact that all that was being done was to purchase an existing plant—the Serampore Luxmi Tulsi Cotton Mills—from the Bombay industrialist Govar-

\(^{154}\) Advertisement in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 1 February 1906.
\(^{155}\) J. G. Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
\(^{156}\) *Ibid*, *loc. cit.*
\(^{158}\) J. G. Cumming, *loc. cit.*
\(^{159}\) “Growth of Swadeshi through Mahomedan Enterprise and Initiative” *Dawn and Dawn Society’s Magazine*, March 1910.
The list of directors included Surjayakanta Acharyya, Manindra Nandi, Sitnakath Roy, Abdus Sobhan Chowdhuri and Nalinbhouri Sarkar; R. N. Mukherji of Martin and Company; and Upendranath Sen who became the managing director. The appeal for subscriptions was signed by Peary Mukherji, Baikunthanath Sen, Ambicacharan Majumdar, Anandachersha Roy, Anathbandhu Guha, Aswinikumar Dutta, Abdul Rassul, Langut Singh, Guznavi, Narendranath Sen, Motilal Ghosh, Surendranath Banerji, Atoosh Chaudhuri and Bhupendranath Bose. Bengalee, 20 January and 6 March 1906.

The Bengalee admitted this on 16 May 1906, and drew attention to the fact that Rs 6 lakh worth of shares of a new European mill had been sold within a week.

Bengalee, 30 May, 4 August 1906. But even as late as 17 August the new management was having to appeal repeatedly to shareholders for payment of their dues. Ibid, 17 August 1906.

Thus at the stormy meeting of 10 July 1906 at the British Indian Association Hall to elect the Congress Reception Committee, Chittaranjan Das charged that Surendranath "had already burdened the Lakshmi Cotton Mills with one of his proteges". Bengal Police Abstract No. 29, 21 July 1906—Home Public Progs Deposit, September 1906, II, 5 (Enclosure J).

Tagore.\textsuperscript{165} The Calcutta Weaving Company started a small mill with 50 looms in a Howrah suburb on a capital of Rs 30,000.\textsuperscript{166} In East Bengal the Tripura Company which had been floated in 1906 started a cotton ginning factory at Chittagong in December 1907.\textsuperscript{167} In the same month production commenced at the Jalpaiguri Pioneer Weaving Mill, a small (nominal capital Rs 50,000) and not particularly successful swadeshi venture in the new province.\textsuperscript{168} Muslim landlords (Abdus Sobhan of Bogra and A. H. Guznawi of Tangail) took the initiative in starting the Bengal Hosiery Company in 1908 with a capital of Rs 2 lakhs; like the Banga Lakshmi, this contented itself with taking over and expanding the works of an old Kidderpore hosiery.\textsuperscript{169} The Pabna Silpa Sanjibani Company, started in 1905, produced hosiery, knitted cotton and silk banians.\textsuperscript{170} So much for the textile schemes which actually got off the ground; the contemporary press bears witness to a far larger number of plans and companies which remained in the end merely on paper.\textsuperscript{171} The most notorious of these was the Indian Spinning and Weaving Company, floated in 1906 with a very ambitious target of Rs 12 lakh share capital, which collapsed early next year in a welter of litigation and scandal.\textsuperscript{172} The total production of weaving mills in Bengal was 5.8 million yards in 1906-7 and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} Bengalee, 28 April, 2 May, and 28 October 1908. Sunil K. Sen. Economic Enterprise—Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, p. 549.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Bengalee, 20 February 1907; Bande Mataram, 27 February 1907.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Prabasi, Kartik 1313 (1906); Bengalee, 11 December 1906, 14 December 1907; G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{168} G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Bengalee, 16 January, 6 February, 4 December 1908. Sunil K. Sen, op. cit., p. 551. J. G. Cummings, op. cit., p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Udayan Chatterji, Swadeshi Industries in Bengal 1905-1947, p. 5. (Paper read at a Seminar on the National Council of Education at the Jadavpur University in 1967.)
\item \textsuperscript{171} Cf. e.g. Prabasi, Kartik 1313 and Bengalee, 12 October and 4 November 1906 for a number of projects which were never realised.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Bengalee, 4 October 1906, 9 January and 9 April 1907. Home Public Progs Deposit, September 1906, n. 5 (Enclosure C); Home Public Progs A, April 1907, n. 207.
\end{itemize}
7.9 million yards the following year; how far the province still was from self-sufficiency may be gauged from the fact that the import of piece-goods from all sources into Calcutta in the same two years amounted to 1160 million and 1330 million yards respectively. 173

The swadeshi period was marked by several notable efforts to introduce the new technique of chrome tanning into the leather industry of Bengal. The Nadia zamindar Biprodas Pal Chaudhuri started a small factory at Maheshgunj, with Sisir Bose who had been trained by Chatterton as manager, and with a shop in Calcutta at Mirzapur Street. Dr Nilratan Sircar founded the National Tannery in the Calcutta suburb of Beliaghata in 1905, with a retail shop on Harrison Road. He had as his assistants Surendranath Roy and (between 1914 and 1919) the leather technologist Birajmohan Das. 174 The new techniques introduced by the patriotic doctor seem to have benefited mainly the Chinese cobbler of the city, though the National Tannery did survive somehow as a struggling concern, and was revived in 1941 by his industrialist son-in-law Sudhirkumar Sen. 175 There was also the Utkaí Tannery of Cuttack, founded by Madhusudhan Das, the pioneer of Oriya nationalism. In January 1908 Pal Chaudhuri, Sircar and Das joined hands with Pandit Mohan Krishna Dhar of Agra to form a Boot and Equipment Factory Company with plans to expand the Agra Stewart Factory started by the latter; the target was a capital of rupees five lakhs divided into 20,000 shares. 176

A considerable number of small and medium sized consumer goods industries sprang up in the wake of the swadeshi movement. Dr Nilratan Sircar started the National Soap Factory at 92 Upper Circular Road with Carr and Mahalanobis

as the managing agents.\textsuperscript{177} Other successful ventures in the same field were the Bengal Soap Company (54/1 Mechhuabazar Street) and the Oriental Soap Factory at Goabagan in Calcutta, and the Boolbool Soap Factory at Gandaria in Dacca run by a manager trained in Tokyo.\textsuperscript{178} Swadeshi soap tended to be highly scented and coloured and extremely variable in quality; a contemporary analysis found that while the best European product contained 93 per cent of pure soap, the corresponding figures for six varieties of its indigenous substitute varied from 66 per cent to 91 per cent.\textsuperscript{179} In January 1907, the moderate leader Rashbehari Ghosh started the Bande Mataram Match Factory at 38 Russa Road, with P. C. Ray and A. P. Ghosh, technicians trained in Japan, as his assistants.\textsuperscript{180} The Oriental Match Manufacturing Company floated in July 1906 included among its directors Peary Mukherji and P. Mitter; the projected capital of one lakh rupees took a very long time to raise, but eventually production was started at Konnaagore in 1909.\textsuperscript{181} A smallscale match-making industry also sprang up at Narail, in Jessore district.\textsuperscript{182} Cheap swadeshi cigarettes (ten for a pice) were turned out in Calcutta by the Globe Cigarette Company (20 Tangra Road), the East India Cigarette Company (17 Beliaghata Road), and the Bengal Cigarette Manufacturing Company (42 Shampukur Street), while in East Bengal the Rangput Tobacco Company was started in 1907 with one-lakh-rupee capital, and machinery purchased from a Bombay firm; among the directors were Pramathanath Bose, Jogendrachandra Ghosh, Biprodas Pal Chaudhuri, three zamindars, three pleaders and a merchant.\textsuperscript{183} The big factory near Monghyr

\textsuperscript{177} Bengalee, 5 October 1906, Bande Mataram, 6 July 1907.
\textsuperscript{178} J. G. Cumming, op. cit., p. 34. G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{179} J. G. Cumming, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, p. 33. Bande Mataram, 23 July 1907.
\textsuperscript{182} Bengalee, 2 February 1907.
\textsuperscript{183} J. G. Cumming, op. cit., p. 43. G. N. Gupta, op. cit., p. 73.

\textit{Bengalee}, 16 December 1907.

SMB-9 (45-43/1976)
started in May 1908 by the Peninsular Tobacco Company (an Anglo-American syndicate) represented an interesting attempt by foreign capital to take advantage of the new market situation created by swadeshi.\textsuperscript{184} The Small Industries Development Company started in 1906 by Jogendrachandra Ghosh's Association (with a capital of two lakh rupees raised through Rs 10 shares) set up the Bengal Button Factory at 130 Bagmari Road, as well as a unit for manufacturing lead pencils. Indians trained in Japan were placed in charge of these plants. Ink-manufacture was another field where good progress was being made, particularly by J. P. Bose who had learnt the art in Japan.\textsuperscript{185} Paper mills had been established before 1905 at Titagarh, Kankinara and Ranigunj, and the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj planned to set up a big modern plant at Baripada.\textsuperscript{186} The Monorama Candle Factory started in 1907 at Dinajpur by another Japanese-trained expert (Nagendranath Majumdar), and the National Oil Mill at Nalchiti in Barisal, represented two successful swadeshi ventures in industrially-backward East Bengal.\textsuperscript{187} The old sugar works at Tarpur in Jessore was reopened in 1906.\textsuperscript{188}

Nothing reveals the limitations of economic swadeshi in Bengal more clearly than the very meagre efforts and achievements in the vital field of engineering. The Sibpur Iron Works started in 1867 was still functioning;\textsuperscript{189} Das and Company began manufacturing iron-safes at Chitpur; the Arya Factory set up at Mechhuabazar specialised in steel trunks;\textsuperscript{189} and in May 1907 the collector of customs reported that there was "a new industry springing up in the manufacture of buckets, of which large quantities have hitherto been imported

\textsuperscript{184} J. G. Cumming, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{186} J. G. Cumming, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 33-34.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}, 18 November 1907. \textit{Bengalee}, 14 March 1908. \textit{Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine}, May 1908—"Swadeshi Notes".
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Bengalee}, 14 March 1906.
\textsuperscript{189} Advertisement in \textit{Bengalee}, 3 July 1906.
\textsuperscript{190} J. G. Cumming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.
annually". But for raw materials such industries had to depend on imported iron and steel, and one of the first results of swadeshi was paradoxically enough an increase in the import of machinery from England. In August 1907 the prospectus of the National Cycle and Motor Company, after stating its objective to be the starting of "a new industry" in India, admitted that for the present only importing and repairing of cycles would be undertaken. Sudhirkumar Sen, the founder of Bengal’s cycle industry after independence, started in a similarly modest manner with an import business (Sen and Pandit) in 1910. The one major exception to this neglect of basic industries was of course Tata Iron and Steel, which began with an initial capital of nearly Rs 2.5 crores raised in a spate of swadeshi enthusiasm in Bombay within three weeks of the publication of the prospectus on 27 August 1907. Though the initiative and the capital came entirely from the western province, it was Pramathanath Bose who had discovered and drawn the attention of the Tatas to the magnificent iron ore deposits of Gurumahishini, with the result that the site of the plant was shifted from the Central Provinces to Sakchi in Bihar (then within Bengal), the Jamshedpur of today. But despite this example, when swadeshi publicists in Bengal criticised the frittering away of resources in the production of nonessential consumer goods, the alternative they generally suggested was not the building-up of basic industries, but the reduction of western-style wants through a reassertion of indigenous taste and the revival of ascetic habits.

By 1907-8, the emphasis in swadeshi efforts was shifting

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3. Amrita Basar Patrika, 10 October 1907. The prospectus is dated 15 August 1907.
4. Moni Bagchi, op. cit., Chapter IV.
6. Cf., for instance, the distinction between ‘commercial’ and people’s swadeshi in Dawn and Dawn Society’s Magazine, March 1909. By 1915,
away from industrial production towards banking, insurance and inland trade, where profits seemed much easier to make and capital was correspondingly less shy. The Bengal National Bank opened in April 1908 had a capital target of Rs 50 lakhs; its directors included the Maharaja of Darbhanga, Suriyakanta Acharyya, the Bhagyakul Roy family (described in the prospectus as ‘bankers and zamindars’), and R. N. Mukherji of Martin and Company.\textsuperscript{197} The second swadeshi bank, the Cooperative Hindusthan, was even more ambitious, with an authorised share capital of Rs 2 crores. Its patrons and directors included the Maharajas of Cooch-Behar, Kassimbazar and Natore, and nationalist leaders Asutosh Chaudhuri and Aswini Dutta.\textsuperscript{198} Neither proved particularly successful or long-lived. The swadeshi era, however, produced in Ambicacharan Ukil of Dacca a talented and dedicated organiser of cooperative ventures in banking and insurance.\textsuperscript{199} The National Insurance Company was floated in November 1906 with a capital target of Rs 10 lakhs; it was followed by the Eastern Life Insurance, the India Equitable Life Insurance and the Hindusthan Cooperative Insurance. The latter had Surendranath Tagore as secretary and Brojendrakishore Raychaudhuri as treasurer, and, together with its off-shoot the Hindusthan Central Cooperative Bureau (managed by Premtosh Bose), was suspected by the police to have secret dealings with the revolutionary movement.\textsuperscript{200} In July 1905, Muslim merchants and

\textsuperscript{197} Amrita Bazar Patrika, 4 October 1907. Bengalee, 14 April 1908.

\textsuperscript{198} Bengalee, 1 August 1908. Dawn and Dawn Society’s Magazine, May 1908. op. cit.

\textsuperscript{199} Haridas Mukhopadhyay, Benoy Sarkarer Baithake (1942), pp. 302-3, 452.

zamindars of Chittagong started the Bengal Steam Navigation Company with a capital of Rs 1 lakh and Munshi Mahomed Kalamian as managing director. The company successfully ran a passenger service between Chittagong, Akyab and Rangoon despite stiff competition from two foreign concerns, and was able to give a dividend of 7½ per cent by 1909. The East Bengal River Steam Service founded by the Roys of Bhagyakul in 1897 was greatly expanded after 1906; by 1908 it had a workshop and dock at Cossipur and was paying a dividend of 12 per cent. The Roys also started the East Bengal Mahajan Flotilla Company in 1908 with a capital of Rs 15 lakhs, and in the same year leading zamindars like Manindra Nandi, Suryakanta Acharyya and Brojendrakishore Raychaudhuri joined hands with Rasul and Aswini Dutta to start the Cooperative Navigation Ltd. But none of these survived for long in the face of the ruthless rate-war started by English shipping lines and the refusal by the jute mills to accept the cargo carried by the Indian concerns. No less than twenty Indian shipping companies with an aggregate capital of Rs 10 crores failed in this manner between 1905 and 1930.

While industry and commerce engrossed most of the attention of swadeshi enthusiasts, a few little-known projects for agricultural development deserve a passing mention. J. C. Ghosh’s Association had planned in August 1905 an Agricultural Settlement to be set up on 45,000 bighas of land purchased near Deoghar, the intention being to provide a training-ground for scientific agriculture as well as a "plea-

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205 Testimony of Jogendranath Roy of the East Bengal River Steam Service Company before the Mercantile Marine Committee—quoted in Acharyya P. C. Ray Birth Centenary Souvenir Volume, pp. 78-79.
sant retirement spot for leisured health-seekers’. After many vicissitudes, the settlement opened more modestly in March 1908 with a training-school for fifteen ‘sons of gentlemen’.

In June 1906, an Indian Cotton Cultivation Company was registered with the intention of starting a cotton farm at Maluti (Santal Parganas) to feed the Banga Lakshmi Mill. The capital target of Rs 10,000 proved very difficult to attain, and when in the summer of 1907 a hundred bighas were sown with cotton, seven-eighths of the crop was ruined by drought. A third scheme—for a thousand-bigha horticultural and dairy farm near Kanchrapara apparently never materialised, though by an interesting coincidence the Haringhata State Dairy Farm was to be set up after independence at a site very close to the one selected in 1907.

A sense of anticlimax is difficult to avoid in any survey of swadeshi business achievements. A string of consumer goods industries of dubious stability, plus a few banks and trading and insurance firms—the sum-total hardly amounted to that industrial rejuvenation dreamt of at the beginning of the movement; and the strongholds of British capital in jute, tea and coal remained entirely unaffected. Yet perhaps the failure was largely inevitable—as Pramathânath Bose had pointed out as early as May 1903, “Without capital to speak of, without higher technical education worth the name, and without protection in any form, Young India is more to be pitied than censured for its lack of industrial enterprise”.

Indians displayed considerable initiative and aptitude in starting virtually from scratch industries like chemicals, ceramics and chrome tanning, and learning from Japan and other countries—lack of technical knowhow was clearly not the crucial limitation. Boycott gave protection of a sort for some time, though it also imparted a consumer-goods bias to the entire movement, since basic industries like steel or

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205 Bengal ee, 30 August 1905, 18 October 1906, 7 March 1908.
207 Ibid., 23 January 1907, 18 April 1907, 8 May 1908.
208 Ibid., 26 March 1907, 23 April 1907.
engineering depended for their markets mainly on government orders. Though the authorities in theory favoured “honest swadeshi”, in Bengal Indian entrepreneurs got “little help or guidance”, the government contenting itself with district exhibitions, publication of monographs on industrial subjects and the establishment of a central weaving school at Serampore in 1909. The Bengal service never produced a Chatterton—and even the efforts of that very enterprising Madras civilian had been obstructed by Morley and benefited in the end mainly European private business.

Lack of capital proved an even more serious limiting factor. Zamindars and establishment businessmen interested in industrial ventures were relatively few in number (it is noteworthy how the same names recur time and again in the lists of swadeshi patrons and directors—Kassimbazar, Gauripur, Muktagaccha, Bhagyakul), and the type of the swadeshi entrepreneur was rather a man like Dr Nilratan Sircar, a kind of latter-day Jyotirindranath, spending his professional savings with an utterly liberal if quixotic hand in scheme after dubious scheme. The one really successful Bengali businessman of the period—Rajendranath Mukherji—built his fortune only through collaboration with Acquin Martin. As J. G. Cumming pointed out in the best contemporary analysis

210 Tata Iron and Steel was greatly helped in its early days by a standing order of 20,000 tons of steel per year for ten years; the government also constructed for it a railway line from Kalimathi (the present Tatanagar) to Gurumahishini—J. G. Cumming, op. cit., p. 23; F. R. Harris, op. cit., p. 192.

211 Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 1913-14, p. 176.


213 From 1898 Alfred Chatterton had tried to start in Madras pioneer state factories in aluminium, chrome tanning and weaving, and the first provincial department of industries had been set up in 1906. Lord Morley’s Despatch of 29 July 1910 abruptly halted such positive state efforts, and the aluminium ware enterprise was eventually handed over to Eardly Norton—Report of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-18. Appendix J; Sunil K. Sen, Studies in Industrial Policy and Development of India (1964), pp. 130-34.

of economic swadeshi—"...the capital for these new enterprises is not coming from the large capitalists, but from the savings of the middle class. It is the opinion of a leading native merchant that it is much easier to make money by an agency in imported goods than by investment in industrial enterprise. The large capitalist has still to be persuaded that he can get a good return for his money in manufacture, rather than in zamindari, or agency, or moneylending."\(^{215}\)

Contemporaries thus tended to attribute Bengal’s lag in indigenous industrial development to the prospect of quick profits in trade and to the lure of land created by the permanent settlement—"One of the reasons why the Western Presidency has got an aristocracy of merchants is that it has not got an aristocracy of zamindars."\(^{216}\) British managing agency, however, combined successful trade with industrial enterprise, while their Bengali counterparts tended to fail in both. Again, Pramathanath Bose was possibly underestimating the degree of convergence produced over time between the zamindari and the ryotwari land tenure systems; the second hypothesis in any case demands a more detailed study of income, expenditure and profitability patterns than is presently available. On the whole, in the words of a very perceptive recent analysis, "the simpler explanation is that entry into modern industry was barred by European control over foreign trade, wholesale trade, and finance".\(^{217}\) The well-entrenched foreign domination over the ‘commanding heights’ of Bengal’s economy thus set severe limits to the realisation of patriotic dreams.

\(^{215}\) J. G. Cumming, op. cit., p. 4.
\(^{216}\) Pramathanath Bose, Lecture delivered at the Bengal Technical Institute, 1 August 1906—Bengalee, 2 August 1906.
\(^{217}\) Amiya Kumar Bagchi, op. cit.—in Leach and Mukherji, op. cit., p. 241. It will be evident that this concluding paragraph is heavily indebted to Dr Bagchi’s article.
III. THE IMPACT OF THE BOYCOTT

The boycott slogan united virtually all sections of nationalist opinion in Bengal during the swadeshi days, and it is also the one aspect of the movement where something like a quantitative assessment is feasible.

The Annual Reports on the Maritime Trade of Bengal give us the statistics of the value in rupees of imports into the province from 1900 to 1912 (see pages 138 & 139).

A wholesale boycott of English goods was obviously never practical politics; the development of swadeshi industries in fact stimulated the import of machinery218 and even of certain varieties of cotton yarn.210 Even the Bande Mataram favoured no more than a ‘graduated boycott’, with Manchester piecegoods, Liverpool salt and foreign sugar as the principal targets220 to which might be added footwear, cigarettes, camphorised goods and foreign liquor. The statistics (Table 1) indicate that the boycott of sugar was a total flop, while the impact on most other imports was never more than marginal if we take the period as a whole. However, sharp dips are noticeable in cotton goods, apparel, tobacco and liquor

218 “The greatest increase was in cotton mill machinery, the value rising by nearly 6 lakhs”, and there were imports also of “a small cigarette manufacturing plant, a small pottery making plant, match making machinery, glass manufacturing machinery... Handpower knitting machines continued to arrive in considerable quantities.” 97 per cent of imports of machinery came from the UK—Report on the Maritime Trade of Bengal, 1906-07, p. ix.

210 The growing demand for hosiery yarns led to an increase during 1906-8 of imports of the counts 16s-30s; while “counts above 50s also show an increase which may be the result of the handloom weavers turning their attention more to the manufacture of fine cloths in anticipation of any ‘swadeshi’ demand”. Yarn of the medium 31s-40s counts fell off, however, and there was a 30 per cent drop in the total volume of imported cotton twist and yarn. Ibid, pp. vi-vii.

### Table

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<th>1902-3</th>
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<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
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<td>79.19</td>
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<td>Piecegoods (yds)</td>
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<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
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<td>122,16.33</td>
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<td>70.92</td>
<td>50.50</td>
<td>71.52</td>
<td>98.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sugar (Rs)</td>
<td>1,59.85</td>
<td>1,64.76</td>
<td>1,48.35</td>
<td>1,83.89</td>
<td>2,09.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Salt (Rs)</td>
<td>44.24</td>
<td>65.04</td>
<td>49.31</td>
<td>52.13</td>
<td>55.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hardware &amp; cutlery (Rs)</td>
<td>77.39</td>
<td>66.03</td>
<td>76.78</td>
<td>81.53</td>
<td>88.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Apparel (including boots &amp; shoes) (Rs)</td>
<td>44.60</td>
<td>46.23</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>47.81</td>
<td>57.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Liquor (Rs)</td>
<td>44.88</td>
<td>47.66</td>
<td>53.77</td>
<td>49.66</td>
<td>48.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tobacco (Rs)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>23.93</td>
<td>28.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes (Nos)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>58.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Matches (Rs)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Glass &amp; glassware (Rs)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Farthen ware &amp; porcelain (Rs)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Soap (Rs)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1. All values given in lakhs (i.e. 15,90.48 = 15 crores 90 lakhs 48 thousand or 15,90,48,000)
2. n.a. = Not Available.
3. % variations in the value of cotton goods over the preceding year has been indicated in parentheses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1905-6</th>
<th>1906-7</th>
<th>1907-8</th>
<th>1908-9</th>
<th>1909-10</th>
<th>1910-11</th>
<th>1911-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>21,14.56</td>
<td>18,62.80</td>
<td>23,73.10</td>
<td>16,20.81</td>
<td>20,20.80</td>
<td>20,53.87</td>
<td>22,73.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>(+14.9)</td>
<td>(-13)</td>
<td>(+27)</td>
<td>(-32)</td>
<td>(+32)</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
<td>(+11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,48.09</td>
<td>1,03.99</td>
<td>1,19.32</td>
<td>93.65</td>
<td>1,05.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.66</td>
<td>1,17.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>133,59.54</td>
<td>116,025.11</td>
<td>133,049.93</td>
<td>97,81.41</td>
<td>125,54.18</td>
<td>113,93.94</td>
<td>123,79.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | 64.18  | 44.71  | 69.15  | 77.22  | 52.67   | 75.45   | 88.60   |
|        | 2,53.18 | 3,34.79 | 3,78.04 | 4,61.61 | 5,02.23 | 5,91.95 | 5,23.61 |
|        | 53.30  | 52.82  | 62.80  | 67.25  | 52.27   | 53.38   | 64.81   |
|        | 75.09  | 87.63  | 1,11.42 | 96.41  | 98.86   | 1,10.07 | 1,26.19 |

|        | 51.22  | 42.84  | 55.81  | 53.74  | 55.02   | 66.85   | 80.07   |
|        | 54.35  | 50.39  | 59.08  | 56.95  | 59.79   | 59.11   | 62.38   |
|        | 32.75  | 31.22  | 36.63  | 32.41  | 40.79   | 21.69   | 23.44   |
|        | 66,60  | 56,30  | 61,30  | 47,10  | 43,90   | 15,50   | 12,80   |
| n.a    |        | 21.79  | 19.85  | 23.12  | 22.67   | 26.29   |         |
| n.a    |        | 39.16  | 37.26  | 39.80  | 47.84   | 49.83   |         |
| n.a    |        | 16.64  | 13.03  | 14.78  | 14.82   | 16.79   |         |
| n.a    |        | 8.07   | 8.06   | 9.04   | 11.38   | 13.44   |         |

4. The volume, as distinct from value, of imports is unfortunately not generally available as a continuous series in the reports. Such series are available only for cotton twist and yarn (in lb), cotton piecegoods (in yards) and cigarettes (in number).
for the years 1906-7 and 1908-9, while the fall in the import of cigarettes proved to be a permanent trend.

But annual import figures alone do not offer a reliable index for the impact of the boycott on the actual sale of foreign commodities. Three sets of factors need to be taken into consideration here.

There was first the question of accumulation of stocks; trade figures could be no more than “a very partial guide”\(^{221}\) since goods imported by merchants on the basis of their expectation of the demand “may be rotting in godowns, unsold and unsaleable”.\(^{222}\) This would of course tend to

\[\text{Table II}\]

(Average for the 5 years 1901-5 = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ending</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
<th>Deliveries</th>
<th>Sold</th>
<th>Unsold</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Ratio of stocks to arrivals</th>
<th>Ratio of unsold to total stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>144.8</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>101.9</td>
<td>100.3</td>
<td>103.0</td>
<td>114.5</td>
<td>105.1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>105.1</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>108.2</td>
<td>109.4</td>
<td>102.2</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>117.8</td>
<td>107.7</td>
<td>110.5</td>
<td>235.7</td>
<td>137.3</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actual Figure
Average for
1901-5 | 169,729 | 169,049 | 40,399 | 8,994 | 49,394 |
(in bales)
1906 | 199,886 | 182,038 | 46,740 | 21,200 | 67,904 |


\(^{222}\) Bengalee, 23 January 1908.

\(^{223}\) Note by the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence Regarding the Swadeshi Boycott in Bengal, 5 October 1906—Home Public Progs Deposit, December 1906, n. 38. paras 5,7.
force down import figures in the following year, and a certain time-lag is in fact noticeable in the impact of the boycott on trade statistics, the sharp declines taking place in 1906-7 and 1908-9, whereas the political campaign acquired its highest tempo in 1905 and 1907.

In October 1906, the director-general of commercial intelligence F. Noel-Paton at Risley's request attempted a sample survey of the accumulation of stocks, collecting figures "in strict confidence from the four largest importers of piecegoods in Calcutta". Table II (see preceding page) indicates that by August 1906, unsold stocks had accumulated to an unprecedented extent in the warehouses of piecegoods importers.

Actual consumption figures are available for salt; these reveal a sharp drop in 1908-9 in the Liverpool article, and a corresponding rise in imports from non-English sources.

**Table III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salt Consumption in Bengal and E. Bengal &amp; Assam (in tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg &amp; Bremen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massowah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the proportion of English salt in the total consumption of Bengal had fallen from 59 per cent in 1905-6 to 28 per cent in 1908-9, and despite some recovery, was still only 37 per cent in 1911-12.

Then there is the problem of factors other than the boycott influencing fluctuations in demand. The world trade depression of 1907\textsuperscript{226} may or may not have had something to do with the 14 per cent decline in the total volume of Bengal’s overseas trade in 1908-9. Official sources often attributed the fall in demand to high prices—that of foreign piecegoods had risen by 24.75 per cent in 1906\textsuperscript{226} and the Report on Maritime Trade linked “the reduced imports in 1906-7” with “the dearness of foodstuffs which prevailed over Bengal and the consuming districts upcountry”.\textsuperscript{227} As the swadeshi substitutes were almost invariably more expensive than their imported counterparts, this is not a particularly convincing argument—all the evidence indicates that the demand for swadeshi was rising during the same period. But it seems probable that the boycott of Manchester cloth owed much of its early success to the extraneous factor of a trade dispute between English manufacturers and Marwari dealers.\textsuperscript{228} F. Noel-Paton noted that Manchester had often imposed unfair terms of trade, and “this it was that gave to the political agitators allies and the means of causing trouble”.\textsuperscript{229} The famous telegram of 1 September 1905 from the Marwari Chamber of Commerce in Calcutta to the Manchester Chamber calling for the withdrawal of the partition as otherwise “we shall be ruined and shall not be able to make future contracts”\textsuperscript{230} and the spectacular drop in ‘Lakshmi’ or Lucky Day contracts (the auspicious day in the pujas on which business agreements for the coming year were customarily signed) from 32,000 packages in 1904 to only 2500 in 1905,\textsuperscript{231} were thus not due to patriotic mo-

\textsuperscript{226} D. R. Gadgil, op. cit., p. 101.

\textsuperscript{226} Report on the Maritime Trade of Bengal, 1908-09, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{227} Home Public Progs Deposit, December 1906, n. 38, op. cit., para 26.

\textsuperscript{228} Report on the Maritime Trade of Bengal, 1906-07, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{229} Home Public Progs Deposit, December 1906, n. 38, op. cit., paras 15-22.

\textsuperscript{230} Bengalee, 6 September 1905, gives the text of the telegram.

\textsuperscript{231} Fortnightly Report from the Government of Bengal, 26 October 1906, para 3, Home Public Progs A, December 1906, n. 147.
atives alone. Once this trade dispute had blown over, the Marwari traders began renewing their bideshi contracts, and on 22 May 1906 the Bengalee denounced them as “the greatest enemies of the swadeshi movement”. Lakshmi Day sales in October 1906 reached the respectable figure of 25,000 packages. The Bengal nationalists attempted to woo the Marwaris through the Maharashtrian leaders Tilak and Khaparde, but despite the latter’s complacent diary entry—“We brought the Marwaris round. The Calcutta leaders apparently did not know how to speak to the Marwaris.”—compradore ties proved stronger than patriotism. The boycott in Bengal consequently could never be as effective as the contemporary Chinese protest against American immigration laws, in which 23 big importing firms had combined to virtually drive out US goods from the Chinese market.

Statistics of annual trade also tell us nothing about short-period fluctuations, and give no help either in tracing the varying incidence of the boycott in the different districts of Bengal. Information on these two counts is not entirely unavailable, though it falls far short of anything like a complete account.

The Statesman’s estimate of the boycott’s impact on certain mufassil districts in its early days has often been quoted (see Table IV).

On 21 September 1905, the superintendent of the Calcutta police reported heavy losses among Marwari piecegoods retailers and Muslim boot-importers of the Chandni Chowk area. Thus “Mahomed Zubbar-Abdul Karim, Chandni

232 Bengalee, 23 December 1905. Hindi Bangabasi, 11 June 1906—RNP(B) for week ending 16 June 1906.
233 Home Public Progs A, December 1906, n. 147, op. cit.
234 Diary of G. S. Khaparde, 12 June 1906. Tilak and Khaparde contacted the Marwaris again in course of their visit to Calcutta for the December 1906 Congress, and Khaparde informs us with engaging frankness that they were entertained at the house of a Marwari gentleman “with dancing of girls half religious, half amorous”. Ibid, 23 December 1906.
TABLE IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of district</th>
<th>Value of goods purchased in September 1904 (in Rs)</th>
<th>Value of goods purchased in September 1905 (in Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessore</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrah</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuddea</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malda</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chowk, usually daily sell, at this season of the year, a thousand rupees worth of imported goods. The value of their sales have dropped to Rs 40-50 a day, (and that of) Shaik Saboo and Shaik Jaboo from Rs 800-1,000 to Rs 100-50." An European firm in the business wired to England: "Boycott result is most disastrous. Boots are not saleable. Pujas season has closed. No demand for rice bowls, soap, glass bangles." L. F. Morshed, the collector of customs, reported in January 1906 that "sale of cigarettes have stopped so far as Bengalis are concerned".

In September 1906, another report from L. F. Morshed.

236 Statesman, 14 September 1905. Cited in Haridas and Uma Mukherji, India's Fight for Freedom (1958), p. 65, and R. C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Volume II (1963), p. 55. Dr Majumdar in this connection makes the somewhat surprising statement that "no exact statistics is available in respect of cotton goods, shoes and cigarettes, to which the boycott was mainly confined at the beginning..." Ibid, p. 53.


noted sharp falls in the import of salt, cotton goods, boots and shoes, and cigarettes—though the demand for sugar was higher than ever:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1905 Aug.</th>
<th>1906 Aug.</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt (British) (Mds)</td>
<td>341,641</td>
<td>302,030</td>
<td></td>
<td>39,611</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt (Foreign) (Mds)</td>
<td>380,854</td>
<td>279,450</td>
<td></td>
<td>101,404</td>
<td>-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt (Indian) (Mds)</td>
<td>47,580</td>
<td>76,615</td>
<td>29,035</td>
<td></td>
<td>+60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (Cwt)</td>
<td>238,053</td>
<td>470,416</td>
<td>232,363</td>
<td></td>
<td>+97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton (Twist &amp; Yarn) (Cwt)</td>
<td>1,361,452</td>
<td>752,994</td>
<td></td>
<td>608,458</td>
<td>-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton (piece-goods) (Yards)</td>
<td>145,128,912</td>
<td>112,497,948</td>
<td></td>
<td>32,630,964</td>
<td>-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots &amp; Shoes (Pairs)</td>
<td>76,824</td>
<td>20,965</td>
<td></td>
<td>47,129</td>
<td>-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes (Numbers)</td>
<td>57,803,690</td>
<td>25,685,880</td>
<td></td>
<td>32,117,810</td>
<td>-55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In October 1906, Noel-Paton gave the following indices of monthly imports, taking the average for the period from April 1904 to July 1906 as 100 (see Table VI on next page).

Districtwise break-ups of sales figures of imported goods are unfortunately not available, but the scattered references in the Fortnightly Reports indicate a sharp contrast between West and East Bengal as regards the impact of the boycott. In the spring and early summer of 1907, the collector was reporting that boycott in Calcutta was “practically dead” and

340 Home Public Progs Deposit, December 1906, n. 38, para 43.

RMB-10 (45-43/1976)
TABLE VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Piecegoods</th>
<th>Salt</th>
<th>Cigarettes</th>
<th>Boots &amp; shoes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>106.50</td>
<td>104.86</td>
<td>123.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>104.07</td>
<td>92.80</td>
<td>119.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>106.03</td>
<td>86.59</td>
<td>128.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>109.08</td>
<td>77.27</td>
<td>113.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>103.22</td>
<td>75.08</td>
<td>111.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>98.98</td>
<td>79.14</td>
<td>100.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>107.35</td>
<td>105.45</td>
<td>109.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>107.52</td>
<td>112.16</td>
<td>97.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>106.20</td>
<td>118.79</td>
<td>94.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>102.97</td>
<td>125.09</td>
<td>88.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>103.41</td>
<td>128.41</td>
<td>88.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>95.27</td>
<td>116.01</td>
<td>77.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>94.66</td>
<td>110.03</td>
<td>67.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trade conditions had regained virtual normalcy.\(^{241}\) While this proved overoptimistic, there being a sharp fall again in demand in October 1907,\(^{242}\) it seems evident that the general atmosphere in Calcutta and in the old province as a whole from 1907 onwards was not particularly favourable for the boycott enthusiast. From East Bengal, however, a report dated 25 May 1907 spoke of “the business in piecegoods and foreign salt and sugar” being heavily damaged by the agitation. Consignments of Liverpool salt “last month by private dealers amounted to only 4,000 maunds, whereas before the boycott they averaged from twenty to twenty-five thousand”.\(^{243}\) In districts like Bakargunj and Dacca, powerful volunteer samitis enforced the boycott rigorously through picketing and social ostracism; such organisations were far weaker in West Bengal.\(^{244}\) The relative success of swadeshi and boycott in the new province is indicated also by the following statistics, unfortunately incomplete, of piecegoods

\(^{241}\) Fortnightly Reports from Bengal, 25 March 1907, 26 April 1907. Home Public Progs A, April 1907, n. 209; May 1907, n. 267.
\(^{242}\) Report on Maritime Trade of Bengal, 1907-1908, p. v.
\(^{243}\) Fortnightly Report from Bengal, 25 May 1907—Home Public Progs A, June 1907, n. 220.
\(^{244}\) Cf. below, Chapters VI, VII
and yarn imports from European and Indian sources into the divisions of Chittagong and Dacca: 245

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1902-3</th>
<th>1903-4</th>
<th>1904-5</th>
<th>1905-6</th>
<th>1906-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chittagong division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European piecegoods</td>
<td>23,511</td>
<td>29,447</td>
<td>44,854</td>
<td>31,363</td>
<td>12,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian piecegoods</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>2,515</td>
<td>11,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European twist &amp; yarn</td>
<td>14,358</td>
<td>11,465</td>
<td>11,234</td>
<td>6,960</td>
<td>10,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian twist &amp; yarn</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>9,194</td>
<td>7,139</td>
<td>3,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dacca division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European piecegoods</td>
<td>112,874</td>
<td>111,383</td>
<td>122,591</td>
<td>123,573</td>
<td>94,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian piecegoods</td>
<td>6,972</td>
<td>4,040</td>
<td>5,269</td>
<td>12,253</td>
<td>9,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European twist &amp; yarn</td>
<td>19,492</td>
<td>19,756</td>
<td>22,638</td>
<td>21,125</td>
<td>14,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian twist &amp; yarn</td>
<td>3,258</td>
<td>3,939</td>
<td>5,492</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>3,866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet taken as a whole, the gap between expectation and achievement seems even wider in the boycott movement than in other aspects of the swadeshi age. We have confined our study to Bengal; on the overall trade figures of British India the boycott left hardly a dent—in cotton piecegoods, for example, the imports amounted to 231.96 crore yards in 1906-7, 253.40 crore yards in 1907-8, 199.42 crore yards in 1908-9, 219.47 crore yards in 1909-10, and 231.05 crore yards in 1910-11. 246 The indigenous substitute was simply not available in adequate quantity or quality in many cases, and

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it was usually more expensive, too. In cotton textile, for instance, the Bombay mills could not yet manufacture the finer types of yarn and cloth, while the handloom product was inevitably costlier than the Manchester article. In salt, there was in Bengal a real displacement of Liverpool in favour of karkatch, but the latter too generally came from foreign sources like Spain. It is also a significant commentary on the social character of the movement that the boycott should have achieved its most spectacular early success in boots and shoes and cigarettes; as Morshead commented, the demand for such commodities came mainly from “Indian gentlemen of the middle class such as clerks, pleaders, etc., and they are the class who really take an interest in and are opposed to the partition”.247

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