Meaning of Swadeshi:

- The word swadeshi is derived from Sanskrit and is a conjunction of two Sanskrit words ‘Swa’ means ‘self or own’ and ‘desh’ means country
- So swadesh means ‘own country’
- Swadeshi, the adjectival form, means ‘of one’s own country’

What is Swadeshi Movement in context of Indian National Movement?

- The Swadeshi Movement had its origin in the anti-partition movement which was started to oppose the British decision to Partition Bengal
- Swadeshi Movement was primarily a mass resolution to use only Indian made goods rather than British made goods
- This strategy was meant to hurt the British on economic front, and thereby force them to concede to popular demand i.e. annulment of Partition of Bengal
- An important aspect of the Swadeshi Movement was the emphasis placed on ‘Self-Reliance’ or ‘Atmasakti’
- Swadeshi Movement was interlinked to/complimented by a parallel 'Boycott Movement', wherein British Goods, Services like schools and courts as well as English speech were boycotted
- Swadeshi movement was also known as Vande Mataram Movement in deltaic Andhra Pradesh

Why & When did Swadeshi Movement Start?

- In December 1903, the proposal of Bengal partition became publicly known. The reaction of nationalist leaders in Bengal against this proposal was moderate in nature. They resorted to petitions, memoranda, speeches, public meetings and press campaigns to express their opinion against partition.
- However British Govt. did not pay heed and decision to partition Bengal was announced on 19th July 1905.
- Thus it was obvious that moderate techniques were not working and a different kind of strategy offering more active resistance to British authority was required.
The formal proclamation of the Swadeshi Movement was made on 7th August 1905 in a meeting held at the Calcutta Town Hall.

The Indian National Congress took up the Swadeshi Call and the Banaras Session in 1905, presided by Gopal Krishna Gokhale supported the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement for Bengal.

How was the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement executed?

- Boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, picketing of shops selling foreign goods, became common in all parts of Bengal as well as in many important towns and cities throughout the country.
- A prominent part in Swadeshi Movement was played by students of Bengal. They not only practised and propagated Swadeshi, but also took a lead in organising picketing of shops selling foreign cloth.
- Women refused to wear foreign bangles and use foreign utensils, washer men refused to wash foreign clothes and even priests declined offerings which contained foreign sugar.
- People using, buying and selling foreign goods were subjected to social boycott.
- Numerous public meetings and processions were organised in cities as well as villages to promote the use of Swadeshi goods and boycott foreign goods.
- Corps of volunteers (or ‘samitis’ as they were called) were another major form of mass mobilisation widely used during Swadeshi Movement.
- Traditional popular festivals, folk theatre forms and ‘melas’ (fairs) were creatively used as means of reaching out to masses.
- As ‘self-reliance’ was an important aspect of Swadeshi movement, serious attempts were made to become ‘self-reliant’ in various fields especially in education and business enterprises catering to day to day needs.
- ‘Charkha’ (spinning wheel) came to typify the popular concern for country’s economic self sufficiency.

Prominent Personalities associated with Swadeshi Movement:

- Boycott of British goods was first suggested by Krishna Kumar Mitra in 1905 through his journal ‘Sanjivni’.
- Lokmanya Tilak took the Swadeshi Movement to different parts of India, especially to Pune and Bombay.
- Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai spread the Swadeshi message in Punjab and other parts of Northern India.
- Syed Haidar Raza led the Swadeshi Movement in Delhi.
- Chidambaram Pillai took the Swadeshi Movement to Madras presidency, which was also galvanised by Bipin Chandra Pal’s extensive lecture tour.
The ‘Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti’ set up by Ashwini Kumar Dutt, a school teacher in Barisal, was the most active volunteer organisation spreading the Swadeshi message in villages.

Acharya P. C. Ray organised his famous Bengal Chemical Swadeshi Stores.

Even the Great Rabindranath Tagore helped to open a Swadeshi Store.

**Reaction of British Empire to Swadeshi Movement:**

- In Bengal, the British crackdown came soon enough, particularly on the students. Disciplinary actions were taken against the students with many of them being fined, expelled, arrested, or beaten up by the police.
- Most repressive was the ‘Carlyle Circular’ which threatened withdrawal of grants and scholarships including disaffiliation of such institutions which failed to prevent students’ participation in politics.
- Among other measures of repression, shouting of ‘Vande Matram and holding public meetings in certain areas was banned.
- Press was controlled through the Newspaper Act which enabled their seizure.
- Swadeshi workers were arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned.
- Police ‘lathi charge’ on mass gatherings was quite frequent.
- Most of the leaders were arrested or deported by 1908

**Effects of Swadeshi Movement:**

- Women, Students and the large section of urban and rural population of Bengal and other parts of India became actively involved in politics for the first time.
- Although peasants were not actively involved in this movement, owing to intensive Swadeshi propaganda, they were exposed to the nationalist ideas and politics for the first time.
- Bengal National College, inspired by Tagore’s Shantiniketan was set up with Aurobindo Ghosh as its Principal. Scores of National Schools sprung up all over the country within a short period. In August 1906 National Council of Education was established.
- This period saw a mushrooming of Swadeshi textile mills, soap and match factories, tanneries, banks, insurance companies etc.
- Swadeshi Movement also brought a cultural revival and fostered the emergence of nationalist art, literature, music and science.
- More importantly, conscience of people at large was awakened and they were prepared to take bold political steps to challenge the British Supremacy in all spheres.
Drawbacks of Swadeshi Movement:

- Except from few prominent Muslims like Abdul Rasul – the barrister, Liaquat Hussain – the popular agitator and Guznavi – the businessman, Swadeshi Movement was not able to garner support from middle and upper class Muslims. This was mainly due to policy of communal divide practiced by British. All India Muslim League which was formed during Swadeshi Movement was the direct outcome of these divisionary policies of British.
- In spite of being a popular movement, there was no active participation from the peasantry. The movement was largely confined to upper and middle classes.
- Use of traditional festivals, customs and institutions for mobilising the masses was misinterpreted and falsely portrayed by Govt. supporters as a measure to promote religious communalism.
- The Swadeshi Movement did not create an efficient party structure or organisation, which was necessary to sustain the movement.
- Moreover it also brought to front, the differences in methodologies of Extremists and Moderates within the Indian National Congress (INC), which eventually resulted in splitting of INC in 1907.

Conclusion

- Swadeshi Movement was the most successful of the pre-Gandhian movement. It became a stepping stone of Nationalist movement, which led to the beginning of organised political movement in India.
- Swadeshi Movement occupies a unique place in the history of Indian Freedom Movement as all the trends and patterns of Indian political scene thereafter, whether conservative or radical, owed their genesis to this movement.

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Thank You

GK Babaji