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**The Calcutta Marwaris and the Swadeshi Movement: In the Context of
Boycott and Swadeshi Politics (1905-1907)**

Imran Shaikh

Research Scholar (PhD), Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata,
700032, West Bengal, India; shaikhimran.bwd744@gmail.com

Abstract: At the dawn of the 20th century, an organized struggle against the partition of Bengal significantly influenced the trajectory of Indian politics. The Swadeshi movement engendered political extremism within the realm of Indian nationalism, leading a contingent of educated Bengalis to take up arms against British rule. In these circumstances, Bengali leaders adopted the policies of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' to undermine British economic interests in Bengal. This paper seeks to explore the role played by the Marwari community of Calcutta in the anti-partition movement of 1905. During that era, the Marwaris were integral to the European trading system. They procured raw materials from various parts of the country for export and served as distributors of foreign products in the local market. Marwari traders were aligned with the British in the realm of commerce. Given this context, it is natural to question how the Marwari traders of Calcutta reacted to the boycott of foreign goods. What if we were to uncover, albeit sparingly, instances of Marwaris supporting the anti-partition boycott movement in history? This paper aims to address the following questions to comprehend the involvement of Calcutta's Marwaris in the 1905 Swadeshi Movement. Firstly, to what extent did the policy of boycotting foreign goods succeed within the Swadeshi movement? Secondly, what was the impact of the 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' policies on the Calcutta Marwaris? And thirdly, did the Calcutta Marwaris indeed participate in the Swadeshi Movement, and if so, what motivated their involvement? Most prevailing studies have dismissed the participation of the Marwari Community of Calcutta in the Swadeshi movement. This paper aims to uncover the answers to these questions and shed light on the extent of the Marwari community of Calcutta's involvement in the Swadeshi movement.

Keywords: *Marwari, Swadeshi, Boycott, Partition, Banian, Lucky Day, Manchester.*

Introduction:

During the Great Revolt of 1857 and the subsequent period, Indians repeatedly mobilised against colonial rule. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, an organised struggle against the partition of Bengal had a profound impact on the course of Indian politics. Through this movement, the subjugated Bengalis regained their self-confidence after a prolonged period of oppression. Lord Curzon announced the partition plan on July 19, 1905, and in protest, on August 7, the Bengali people called for a public meeting against it. The movement persisted until the formal annulment of the partition of Bengal at the Delhi court by King George V of England on December 12, 1911. Previously, the primary aim of Indian politics was to secure specific demands from the English lords through prayers and petitions. The Swadeshi movement gave rise to an extreme form of Indian nationalism, with a section of educated Bengalis following the path of armed revolution to rid India of British rule. In these circumstances, Bengali leaders adopted the policies of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' to dent British economic interests in Bengal. 'Swadeshi' involved the development of indigenous production and the use of indigenous products, while 'Boycott' meant non-cooperation with the foreign rulers in every aspect. From this perspective, the anti-partition movement was simultaneously an economic movement based on the principle of self-reliance.

At that time, the Marwaris were part of the European trading system. They collected raw materials from different parts of the country to send abroad and acted as distributors of foreign products in the local market. The Marwari traders were allies of the British in the domain of trade. In such a situation, it was natural that the Marwari traders of Calcutta were affected by the policy of boycotting foreign goods. However, the financial aspect of the Swadeshi movement has been extensively discussed in various historical studies. Indeed, the role of the Calcutta Marwaris in the Swadeshi Movement has been discussed in limited terms in those writings. Most of the predominant studies denied the participation of the Marwari Community of Calcutta in the Swadeshi movement. The paper emphasises the following points to understand the role of the Calcutta Marwaris in the anti-partition movement of 1905; Firstly, to what extent was the policy of boycotting foreign goods successful in the Swadeshi movement? Secondly, what was the impact of the policy of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' on the Calcutta Marwaris? Thirdly, did the Calcutta Marwaris indeed participate in the Swadeshi Movement, and if so, what motivated their

involvement? In this paper, I will attempt to find answers to these questions and illustrate the extent of the Marwari community of Calcutta's involvement in the Swadeshi movement.

While writing this paper, the most significant challenge I encountered was the dearth of sources. In discussing the role of the Marwari community in the Swadeshi movement, I have extensively utilised the West Bengal State Archive. The archival sources used here include the Reports of the Native News Papers, Home Political Confidential Files, History Sheets, etc. and Various contemporary newspapers such as Amrita Bazar Patrika, Pravasi, Hitvarta, Bharat Mitra, etc. were also consulted. I also used annual reports of various chambers of commerce, such as the Bharat Chamber of Commerce, Bengal Chamber of Commerce, and Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, etc. In addition to the above sources, I have referred to various books published in Bengali, Hindi, and English language. In this context, Sumit Sarkar's 'The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-1908,' Amlesh Tripathi's 'Bharater Mukti Songramer Chromponthi Porbo,' Peter Hiss's 'The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India,' Haridas Mukhopadhyay and Uma Mukhopadhyay's 'The Swadeshi Movement and Bengal's Modernity' etc. have been particularly helpful.

The Concept of Boycott and Swadeshi:

While discussing the role of the Marwari community in the Swadeshi movement, it becomes necessary to delve into the leading components of the movement: 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi'. However, the idea of Boycott and Swadeshi was not new to the country; in 1881, boycott was discussed and attempted for the first time in 1896. On the other hand, Gopal Rao Deshmukh, in 1849, promulgated the concept of Swadeshi for the first time, later encouraged by Rajnarayan Bose as an exponent of Indian nationalism. Navagopal Mitra devoted himself to the Swadeshi campaign through the Hindu Mela from 1867. (Bose, 227) In Maharashtra, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, G. V. Joshi, and V. Phadke were torchbearers. Between 1873 and 1876, Bholanath Chandra wrote a series of articles on Swadeshi in 'Mukherjee's Magazine'; he wrote, "Our active co-operation is the cause of prosperity in Manchester, and its cessation would inevitably lead to the decline of foreign industry".¹ On July 20, through 'Sanjeevani', Krishna Kumar Mitra published a 'Protigga Patra' to boycott foreign products and advocated in favour of indigenous products. He said, "In the name of the motherland, we are taking the oath that we will not purchase any foreign product instead of indigenous product".²

At this juncture, boycott proposals were accepted in protest meetings in several districts across Bengal. On August 7, the Bengali leaders called a general meeting at the Town Hall, where they took an oath for the unification of Bengal, saying, "Today we are not Hindus, not Muslims, not Marwaris, not Marathi; we are Bengalis, sons of Mother Bengal".³ From the Town Hall meeting, they adopted the 'Boycott' resolution and appealed to boycott foreign goods. It said, "Who does not know of the stream of wealth which is flowing along the channels of commerce among the English merchants, and which, with its thousand side channels, has penetrated the very interior of our home? How long does it take a country like this to bring the English merchants under control—a country in which a mere rag is enough to cover nakedness? The Goddess of prosperity presiding over English commerce will be shaken out of her repose if a roar goes up from Manchester, Sheffield, and Leeds".⁴ Arabinda Ghosh began to strongly advocate a complete boycott (what he called 'passive resistance') through his articles published in 'Bandematram' (11–23 April 1907). Lajpat Roy said about the boycott, "I admit, British public opinion has the power to remove our grievances, but will their attention be drawn to the injustice done to the Indians if their pockets are not strained"?⁵

Boycotting British Goods and Its Impact:

The impact of the Swadeshi movement outside Bengal manifested in Punjab, Maharashtra, Orissa, and many parts of North India. The focal point of our investigation in this article centers on ascertaining whether the Marwaris, who have been present in Bengal for over a century, were unequivocally affected by the Swadeshi Movement. Currently, there is a dearth of specific information on this matter, with the available data being fleeting and fragmented. Predominantly, the information pertains to the activities of Marwari traders, contributing to an understanding of their role in the Swadeshi movement. As previously mentioned, a substantial portion of foreign cloth imported into Bengal was under the control of Marwari merchants. Foreign companies engaged Banyans⁶ to distribute imported goods in the local market, and these Banyans were largely Marwari. Consequently, a prevailing notion has emerged that Marwaris were not aligned with the Swadeshi Movement, based on the assumption that they were intricately linked with the trade of English goods. However, little attention has been paid to those Marwaris who were not involved in the trading of English goods or any other commercial activities. Here, we endeavor to formulate an assessment based on statistical data regarding the

efficacy of the foreign goods boycott initiative. Additionally, we aim to ascertain the extent of acceptance of the boycott policy among the Bengalis, beyond the realm of Marwari importers.

During the Swadeshi movement, the Bengali leaders called for a boycott of foreign goods, such as Manchester cloth, Liverpool salt, foreign sugar, etc. Subsequently, foreign products like shoes, cigarettes, enamelware, liquor, etc., were added to it. Let us now examine the available information precisely regarding the impact of boycotting foreign goods and India's position as a producer. We shall also assess whether it was indeed possible for Indians to wholeheartedly embrace indigenous products. It was practically impossible for the Indian people, who had been under colonial rule for a long time to give up all kinds of foreign goods, services and employment. Meanwhile, the indigenous factories could not meet the demands of the country. *Pravasi* published an article entitled '*Deshi Jiniser Bybhar*' gives a statistic about the production and demand for cloth in India at that time; it helps us to understand the gap between

Table: 1⁷

Name of the Items	1900-1	1901-02	1902-03	1903-04	1904-05	1905-06	1906-07	1907-08
Cotton Goods (Rs)	1590.48	1596.86	1603.35	1559.68	2866.08	2144.56	1862.80	2373.10
Twist & Yarn (lb)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	69.14	79.19	148.09	103.99	119.32
Piecegoods (yds)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11180.17	12216.33	13359.54	116025.11	133049.93
Woollen Goods (Rs)	86.78	70.92	50.50	71.52	98.29	64.18	44.71	69.15
Sugar (Rs)	159.85	164.74	148.35	183.89	209.52	253.18	334.79	378.04
Salt (Rs)	44.24	65.04	49.31	52.13	55.94	53.30	52.82	62.80
Apparel (Boots & Shoes) (Rs)	44.60	46.23	47.82	47.81	57.10	51.22	42.84	55.81
Liquor (Rs)	44.88	47.66	53.77	49.66	48.07	54.35	50.39	59.08
Tobacco (Rs)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	23.93	28.76	32.75	31.22	36.63
Cigarettes (Nos)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	58.30	66.60	56.30	61.30

Notes: All values are given in lakhs (i.e., 1590.48= 15 crores 90 lakhs 48 thousand)

production and demand. It says, "In 1902-3, cotton cloth of all kinds came to British India at 210,98,15,829, i.e., about 210 crores yards. The population of British India is 23,18,99,507, i.e., roughly 23 crores — so about 9 yards of cloth per person. The number of Bengalis is approximately four crores. Therefore, only Bengalis need 36 crores yards of cloth per year... To meet the needs, we needed 600 mills instead of 200 mills, and 3600 mills are required for the whole of British India..."⁸ Namely, it was not possible for indigenous factories to meet this huge demand. Even setting up new factories to meet demand was a long-term plan.

Here we try to understand, with the help of statistical data, the volume of imports of foreign goods boycotted during the years of the movement and the significance of the boycott on the import of foreign goods. We can see from Table-1, the import of cotton cloth which was 1559.68 crores rupees in between 1903-04 that increased to 2866.08 crores in 1904-5, and there was a decrease in imports from 1906 to 1907. But yarn, peace goods, sugar, liquor, and cigarettes each saw an increase in imports between 1904 and 1906. In the case of products like woollen cloth, salt, etc., had a slight decrease in imports was noticed during the same time, though it was not particularly significant. Table 2 shows that during the period when the intensity of the agitation was at its peak, the import was hampered a little bit. Such as British and other foreign salt decreased by 11% and 26%, respectively, while the demand for Indian salt increased by 60%. Similarly, the imports of foreign cotton (44%), cotton textiles (22%), foreign shoes (68%), cigarettes (55%) etc., have decreased. But, the boycott of foreign sugar was a complete failure, increasing by 97%. Though contemporary newspapers preached not to use foreign sugar and salt, they said cow's blood, pig and cow bone powder are used to purify the foreign sugar and salt.⁹ Even the Brahmin-Pandits of Nabadwip and Benares vowed not to use foreign sugar and salt on religious and social occasions.¹⁰ Table No. 3 shows the amount of monthly imports of major products boycotted during the period of July 1905 to July 1906. From this, it can be seen that there was a decrease in cotton imports from July 1905 to December 1905, but it increased again in January, again in February 1906, and in the following months there was a considerable decrease in cotton imports. In the case of salt, imports fell steadily from July 1905 to December 1905 but rose rapidly from January 1906. The condition of the indigenous industry was not adequate, as Table No. 4 depicts. Though, the number of factories increased between 1881-2 and 1904-5 under indigenous enterprise. A report of the 'Howrah Hitoisi' on April 21, 1906, says,

from the inception of the Swadeshi Movement 17 cotton mills, three coal mines, two gold mines, 31 banks and 21 insurance companies are registered in the country, and Indians' money has been invested in most of the cases. Hence, the above data demonstrates that the call for boycotting foreign goods was unsuccessful, and it is unfair to solely attribute responsibility to the Marwari importers.

Table 2¹¹

Items	August,1905	August, 1906	Increase	Decrease	Percentage
Salt (British) — Mds	341641	302030	—	39611	-11
Salt(Foreign) — Mds	380854	279450	—	101404	-26
Salt (Indian) — Mds	47580	76615	29035	—	+60
Sugar— Cwt*	238053	470416	232363	—	+97
Cotton (Twist & Yarn) —Cwt	1361452	750416	—	608458	-44
Cotton (Piecegoods) —Cwt	145128912	112497948	—	32630964	-22
Boots & Shoes — Pairs	76824	20965	—	47129	-68
Cigarettes —Nos	57803690	25685880	—	32117810	-55

**CWT- Stand for centum or central weight, meaning one Hundredweight. The value of hundredweight differs in its American and British usages. In United States Hundredweight =100 pounds and in UK Hundredweight =112 pounds.*

Table 3¹²

Year/Month	Cotton Cloths	Salt	Cigarette	Boot and Shoes
1905, July	106.50	104.86	123.03	150.88
August	104.07	92.86	119.03	118.64
September	106.03	86.59	128.66	123.36
October	109.08	77.27	113.61	119.12
November	103.22	75.08	111.76	87.62
December	98.98	79.14	100.52	54.78
1906, January	107.35	105.45	109..03	45.00
February	107.52	112.16	97.35	34.28
March	106.20	118.79	94.09	46.62
April	102.97	125.09	88.55	52.14
May	103.41	128.41	88.25	62.30
June	95.27	116.01	77.13	78.77
July	94.66	110.03	67.88	71.50

Table 4¹³

Name of Factories	Number of Factories up to 1881-82	Number of Factories up to 1904-05	Growth
Jute Mill	8	22	3
Wool, Silk & others	3	31	10
Sugar Mill	4	9	2
Paper Mill	1	5	5

Marwari Society in the Swadeshi movement:

In the early 20th century, Marwaris gradually became politically conscious. Meanwhile, they confined themselves to trade and felt the urge for political affiliation along with trade. Although the root of their political consciousness was in trade, they wanted to protect their trade by taking part in politics. Initially, the purpose of the social organisations they formed was

mainly to elucidate various social and business issues. Primarily, the organisation that played a decisive role in awakening political awareness among the Marwaris was Vaishya Sabha. A few enthusiastic youths of the community contributed to the formation of the Vaishya Sabha (1903).¹⁴ The members of the Vaishya Sabha started an organisation called Buddhi Vardhani Sabha to promote public activities and education in Marwari society. Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar took charge of the organisation; he was the first to sow the seeds of political awareness among the Marwaris. Discussing the role of Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar in Marwari society, Marwari historian Balchand Modi quotes Pandit Madhav Prasad Mishra in his book, "A Maharashtrian youth is imparting political education to the uneducated Marwaris of Barabazar, and political consciousness is growing rapidly among the Marwari youth as well".¹⁵ Modi, further noted that members of the Buddhi Vardhani Sabha actively participated in Swadeshi Movement. According to him, 'When there were no shops for Swadeshi products, Buddhi Bardhani Sabha's members used to collect Swadeshi products and organise exhibitions. These Marwari youths used to wear foreign clothes from childhood, but during the Swadeshi movement, they gave up foreign clothes'.¹⁶ Modi felt that Deuskar was behind all this.

It cannot be said that the Marwari business community of Calcutta was completely indifferent to the Swadeshi movement. In the early stages of the movement, a section of Marwari traders was influenced by the Swadeshi movement and participated in it; various contemporary newspapers and periodicals attest to this fact. There is no proper evidence available on whether the common Marwari population of Calcutta spontaneously participated in anti-partition meetings and rallies in support of the Swadeshi campaign. However, Marwari historian Radhakrishna Neotia claims that the Marwaris took to the streets in support of the Swadeshi movement. In his book, he quoted a report in *The Statesman* dated August 18, 1905 – "...a large number of Marwari were visible among the packed masses..."¹⁷ In this context, Balchand Modi said, "When the boycott of foreign goods started during the Anti-Partition Movement of 1905, the Marwaris had to face a challenging situation because the Marwaris had close ties with foreign traders. But the youths of the society, forgetting their interests and responding to the call of the country, where there was a meeting and procession related to the Swadeshi movement, a few youths would reach and have their own opinion about the promotion of Swadeshi and the expulsion of foreign products".¹⁸ Historian D. K. Taknet writes that this movement led to a sense of duty and political awareness among Marwari businessmen.¹⁹ The Hindi newspaper *Hitabarta*

published a report discussing the Marwaris joining the Swadeshi movement; it says, a meeting of the Marwaris was held on September 27 at the Vaishya Shava and Zamindar of Teota presided over the meeting. Where the Marwaris said, "they would be glad to see the present Swadeshi movement succeed. Nothing would make them happier than carrying their livelihood by selling homemade goods. It will save them from the clutches of the English merchants".²⁰

Apart from Calcutta, the Marwaris from other parts of Bengal and even outside of Bengal were influenced by the Swadeshi movement of Bengal. A report in the Arya Barta from Ranchi stated that all the Marwari cloth merchants in Bhagalpur were now dealing in Swadeshi cloth.²¹ News in the Hindu Patriot published on January 6, 1906, stated, "The Marwaris of Hathras (North India) have decided to start a Swadeshi spinning and weaving concern, the capital being Rs. 400,000 divided into shares of Rs. 500 each. Nearly half the amount has already been subscribed".²² In a report from Balasore, "a Marwari named Laxmikant has introduced improved hand-loom in Balasore that is turning out good dhotis and saris. The Marwari is unable to compete with European clothes, which sell at a cheaper rate. The writer of the Paper exhorts the public to encourage the Marwari and his business in every way".²³

Scholars hold divergent perspectives on the degree of involvement of the Marwari community in the Swadeshi Movement. One viewpoint emphasizes the oppression experienced by Marwari traders at the hands of different British chambers of commerce and their repressive policies. Since its inception, British merchants exercised dominance over Marwari traders, shaping the narrative of their participation in the movement. Earlier, the Marwaris had no commercial organisation in Barabazar, and they had to approach the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, which was controlled by the Europeans, to resolve their trade-related issues. Hitherto, the agreement signed by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce with the Marwaris was unilaterally imposed.²⁴

The Swadeshi Movement provided them with a platform to protest the longstanding injustices they had endured. In the course of the Swadeshi Movement, the Marwari Chamber of Commerce conveyed a telegraph to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, articulating the Marwaris' inability to vend their clothes. In response, Manchester opined that it was unwise to boycott English goods on account of the Partition of Bengal.²⁵ In a report, Bharat Mitra wrote, The English Chamber of Commerce has considered the resolution of the Marwari Chamber of

Commerce regarding the proposed changes to be made in terms of contracts with English firms. However, the manner in which the English Chamber of Commerce responded demonstrated their low regard for the Marwaris. The British view the Marwaris as an insignificant community.²⁶ The newspaper advised the Marwaris, "As long as the Europeans do not accept the terms proposed by them (Marwaris), they should refrain from purchasing their goods".²⁷ During the movement, another instance that exemplifies their involvement; was, when the Marwari Chamber of Commerce appealed to the Manchester Chamber and they urged the Manchester Chamber to intervene with British authorities and implore them to revoke the partition of Bengal. The Dhaka Gazette reported, 'The Marwari community of Calcutta, the premier cloth merchants of this part of the country, requested the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to intervene and influence some power there to stop the partition of Bengal.' In response, Manchester advised their proteges (Marwaris) to discontinue the boycott movement, as it was 'unwise' and 'foolish'.²⁸

From the preceding discourse, it can be inferred that the Marwari community did not exhibit complete indifference towards the Swadeshi movement. A segment of Marwari society, particularly its youth, found themselves drawn to the principles of 'swadeshi' and 'boycott,' actively engaging in the movement. However, it is imperative to ascertain whether the Marwari community's involvement in the movement stemmed from a genuine protest against the injustices inflicted upon Bengalis due to the partition of Bengal or if there were ulterior motives driving Marwari traders to participate. A section of scholars asserts that the Marwaris residing in Calcutta remained aloof from the movement. This view posits that the Marwaris, being a privileged class under British rule, were closely intertwined with British commerce, and a substantial portion of British trade was under their control. Thomas Timberg, in his comprehensive work, delves into the history of Marwari involvement, he elucidates, "The bulk of Marwaris, as I have shown, was originally engaged as intermediaries between domestic producers and consumers, and foreign exporters and importers".²⁹ This perspective was further underscored by the Maharaj of Bikanir during the golden jubilee ceremony of the India Chamber of Commerce, who noted, "The members of this chamber handled and still 80 per cent of the import trade in piece goods in Calcutta".³⁰ This raised questions about the patriotism motivating Marwari businessmen's participation in the Swadeshi movement. Anglo-Indian newspapers asserted that the Marwaris bore the brunt of the boycott, with reports from Englishman stating, "The Marwaris and the Musalmans have become highly offended with the Bengalis in

consequence of the loss those two communities have suffered through the spread of the Swadeshi Movement".³¹ Shivnath Shastri, in his essay 'Swadeshi Dhua' also cast doubt on the patriotism of the Marwaris, contending that they exhibited little concern for the welfare of their homeland. He remarked, "Thousands of Marwaris who are buying and selling in Calcutta's Burabazar, how many of them care for the welfare of the country".³²

A matter of scholarly dispute revolves around the Marwaris' decision not to formalize their yearly contract with Manchester on the auspicious occasion of the 'Lucky Day' in the year 1905. The prevailing consensus among academics posits that the Marwaris refrained from signing the accord due to issues pertaining to its terms, rather than any manifestation of patriotic sentiment. But, an intriguing report from a contemporary newspaper suggests an alternative narrative; according to this source, not only did the Marwaris refrain from endorsing the contract on that particular day, but they also purportedly intended to establish a mill in support of the Swadeshi movement.³³ Nevertheless, another report in *Hitbarta* offered a counter-narrative, suggesting that the reasons for the Marwaris' abstention from signing agreements on the auspicious "Lucky Day" (Vijaya Dasami) were multifaceted. Firstly, the Marwaris were compelled to sign contracts at inflated prices due to the significant surge in the cost of foreign clothes, which would have resulted in losses. Secondly, English merchants caused substantial delays in cloth deliveries, causing financial losses to the Marwari traders. Hence, their support for the Swadeshi movement was, in part, an attempt to free themselves from the grip of English traders.³⁴ Sumit Sarkar concurred, explaining that the Marwaris' refusal to sign contracts on Vijaya Day stemmed from disagreements over contract terms rather than a genuine allegiance to Swadeshi.³⁵

At the close of 1905, the sale of Manchester cloth in the market increased. During this period, some unscrupulous businessmen spread rumours and granted permission to the public to purchase British-made cloth. They expressed the opinion that nobody could break their promise to boycott Manchester if they bought British piece-goods already in store. The sale of foreign cloth in the market increased to such an extent that several traders started contemplating the re-importation of foreign cloth.³⁶ In such a situation, the Swadeshi leaders were concerned that the Marwaris might break their promise. However, it is important to note that the Marwaris cannot be held entirely responsible for this situation. The lack of planning by the leaders of the

Swadeshi movement was also a major factor. The leaders of the movement did not provide any direction on how the foreign goods worth billions of rupees stored in warehouses would be sold.

In early 1906, businessmen were observed renegeing on their commitments to Swadeshi and reengaging in the trade of foreign goods. Various contemporary newspapers published pro-Swadeshi articles to raise awareness and implored traders, alongside the general populace, to patronize indigenous products for a little longer. Failure to do so, they warned, could result in social ostracism. An article titled '*Swadeshi Problem*' wrote, "The Marwari merchants of Calcutta have forgotten their vows and are stained their honour. They are now making contracts with the English weavers".³⁷ A contemporary newspaper published an article, titled, '*Punishment of the Enemies of their Country*', asserting that, punitive measures should be taken against unscrupulous merchants who, after initially endorsing the boycott of English-made goods, were now violating their commitment and attempting to deceive those who adhered to the vow".³⁸ Subsequently, reports emerged of foreign cloth agreements involving Marwaris; the Bengalee cited rumours that a Marwari dealer had recently entered into a contract with a Manchester firm for 5000 bales of *dhoties* with the stipulation that the cloth should not bear the name of the manufacturers. This manoeuvre seemingly aimed to pass off the consignment as Swadeshi cloth to unsuspecting buyers.³⁹ The journal called upon the Marwari Chamber of Commerce to intervene and warn that failure to do so could prompt the Bengali community to consider a boycott of all Marwaris. It emphatically stated, "there is now not the least doubt that the Marwaris are the greatest enemies of Swadeshi."⁴⁰ Simultaneously, they cautioned against the Marwaris, who were allegedly attempting to sell foreign goods in local markets with the assistance of a few Bengali Mahajan in Mufassal.⁴¹ The newspaper "Charu-Mihir," published in Mymensingh, reported that Marwari traders faced a boycott in Mymensingh for trading in foreign goods.⁴² Nonetheless, it appears that during Durga Puja, the Marwaris endeavoured to distribute and sell foreign goods within the local markets.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the role of the Marwari community in the Swadeshi movement was not entirely inconsequential. Regarding their participation in the movement, the Marwari community appears to be divided into two factions. One faction exhibited spontaneous involvement, especially in the youth segment, which included members of the Buddhi Bardhani Sabha. They were influenced by the Swadeshi movement, embraced Swadeshi products, advocated for Swadeshi, and actively participated in various

meetings and processions. Additionally, evidence suggests that the Marwaris, particularly members of the Vaishya Sabha, were willing to engage in the trade of Swadeshi articles by boycotting foreign goods. There are even instances where Marwaris ventured to establish indigenous industries outside Bengal. Conversely, the other faction, the participation of Marwari import traders in the movement has faced criticism from many historians. According to this perspective, Marwari merchants joined the movement due to their dissatisfaction with the terms of contracts imposed by Manchester merchants. However, a more nuanced inspection of the available information reveals new insights into the motivations behind their participation. Firstly, Marwari traders had endured exploitation by British traders for an extended period, leading them to view the Swadeshi movement as a means of liberation from this exploitation. Secondly, by supporting the movement, they aimed to exert pressure on English merchants and advance certain demands. Thirdly, under mounting pressure from the Swadeshi movement, English trading companies began to relent on their demands. However, they eventually resumed importing foreign goods, despite having initially sworn off them. In essence, while a segment of Marwari society, particularly the youth, exhibited spontaneous involvement in the Swadeshi movement, the support of Marwari importers (foreign goods) appears to have been driven by multifaceted motives.

Notes And References

¹ Rajnarayan Bose, *Atmchrit*, 227. Cited in, Amlsh Tripathi, *Bharoter Mukti Songramer Chromponthi Porbo* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1987, 9th ed. 2018), 115.

² Bholanath Chandra, *Mukherjee's Magazine*, Vols 2-5, Cited in, Tripathi, *Bharoter Mukti Songramer Chromponthi Porbo*, p.116.

³ *Daily Hitavadi*, August 7, 1905, Report on Native Papers in Bengal, Week Ending August 12, 1905. In West Bengal State Archive.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Roy, L. *The Swadeshi Movement*, *Indian Review*, Vol.7, pp.- 333-36.

⁶ “A banian is a person by whom all purchases and sales of goods, merchandize, and produce are made and through whom all shipments are made on account and on behalf of the merchant or mercantile firm in whose establishment he is banian. Such a banian is therefore responsible for the quality and quantity of the goods, merchandise, produce

and shipments made through him or his Sircars or servants whom he employs. He has to make good any deficiency in weight or quality, to make compensation for any fraud in shipment of such goods or produce”, Sinha, N. K. (1967). *Indian Business Enterprise: Its Failure in Calcutta (1800–1848), Bengal Past and Present* (Diamond Jubilee Issue). pp.- 112–113.

⁷ The Annual Reports on the Maritime Trade of Bengal. (1900-1908). In, Sarkar, S. (1994, First Published 1973) *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*. (pp.- 137-139). New Delhi, People’s Publishing House.

⁸ Chattopadhyay, R. (1905). *Deshi Jiniser Bybhar. Pravasi*, 5th volume. (6th issue). pp.- 346-352.

⁹ *Sanjibani*, April 26, 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), week ending May 5, 1906. See also *Daily Hitavadi*, October 10, 1906, R. N. P. B., Week Ending October 13, 1906, p. 907. In WBSA.

¹⁰ Fortnightly Report from Government of Bengal, 17 September 1906 -Home Public Progs B, October 1906, 13.

¹¹ *Daily Hitavadi*, July 9, 1906, Report on Native Papers in Bengal (Confidential), Week Ending July 14, 1906,

¹² Home Public Progs Deposit, December 1906, n. 38, 43.

¹³ Sriramprana Gupta, *Swadeshi*, *Pravasi*, Part VI, Number 7, 1906, 371-374.

¹⁴ Modi, 616-17. (Babu Ramkumar Goenka, Sadaram Kheria, Phulchand Chowdhury, Ramgopal Khemka, Nagamal Modi, Devibux Saraf, Nayansukh Das Sarada, Lakshminarayan Kanodia and others contributed in the formation of Vaisya Sabha).

¹⁵ Modi, 624.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Radhakrishna Neotia (Ed.), *Barabazaar Ke Kariyakarta: Remembrance and Tribute*, (Calcutta: Sri Barabazaar Kumarasva Books, 1982) 52.

¹⁸ Modi, *Desh ke Itihasa Me Marwarira Jatika Sthana*, 711.

¹⁹ D. K. Taknet, *Marwari Samaj*, (Jaipur, 1989), 189.

²⁰ *Hitbarta*, October 1, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending October 7, 1905, 982.

²¹ *Aryabarta*, November 28, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending November 11, 1905, 1063.

²² *Hindu Patriot*, January 6, 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending, Saturday, January 6, 1906, 23.

²³ *Sangbad Bahika*, October 18, 1906, , R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending November 3, 1906, 967.

²⁴ Balchand Modi, *Desh ke Itihasa Me Marwarira Jatika Sthana*, (Calcutta: New Rajasthan Press, 1940), 613. The first organisation the Calcutta Marwaris formed was the Marwari Association in 1898, and in 1900, the Marwari Chamber of Commerce was established as its sub-organisation.

²⁵ *Bharat Mitra*, 16 September 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending September 23, 1905, 929.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Dhaka Gazette*, September 18, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 23 September 1905, 930.

²⁹ [Some such Marwari firms who worked as banyans under British firms—Sir Hariram Goenka Worked with the firm Raleigh Brothers (largest cloth importer), Lakshmi Narayan Kanoriya was associated with McLeod & Company (Hessian goods), Dwarkadas Ramkumar was associated with Ludwig Duke, Sebaram Ramrakhidas was associated with Cattlewell Bullen (Textiles importers), Tarachand Ghanshyamdas was associated with the firm Shaw-Walls, Surajmal Jhunjhunwala was Banyan of Graham & Company (Peace Goods)].

³⁰ Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1900-1950, India Chamber of Commerce p.8. The Marwari Chamber of Commerce was established in 1900 AD to protect the commercial interests of Marwari traders, the first president of this organization was Hafaram Khemka and the secretary, Ridkaram Surana. After the independence of the country, the name of this organization was changed to Bharat Chamber of Commerce (February 2, 1949).

³¹ *The Daily Hitavadi*, September 26, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 30 September, 1905, 956-957.

³² *Shivnath Shastri, Swadeshi Dhua*, Pravasi, Part Five, Number Three, 125.

³³ *Hitbarta*, November 5, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending November 11, 1905, 1065.

³⁴ *Hitbarta*, October 1, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 7 October 1905, 982.

³⁵ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 142-43.

³⁶ *The Daily Hitavadi*, November 12, 1905, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 18 November 1905, 1092.

³⁷ *Hitbarta*, 21 January 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 27 January, 80.

³⁸ *Hitbarta*, 28 January 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending February 3, 1906, 97. (For such selfish traders, society will be in a position to punish these wretches in the following manner—1) none shall eat and drink with them, 2) none shall intermarry with them, 3) no washer man shall not wash their clothes, 4) barber shall not shave them, 5) none shall buy from or to them. 6) The boys and girls shall instructed not to play with their children).

³⁹ *Bengalee*, 22 May 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending June 2, 1906, 252.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Sanjeevani*, September 13, 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending 22 September 1906, 864.

⁴² *Charu-Mihir*, 18th September, 1906, R. N. P. B. (Confidential), Week Ending September 29, 1906, 881.