



Effect of boycott: the founding step towards the Swaraj in Bombay Karnataka (1905-1919)

T.V.Adivesha

Department of History, P.G Centre Govt. College, YADGIR -585202 State, Karnataka, India.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 19 November 2011;

Received in revised form:

10 February 2012;

Accepted: 25 February 2012;

Keywords

Freedom Struggle,
Nationalism,
Swadeshi,
Boycott,
National Education.

ABSTRACT

The four programmes of the Swadeshi movement which were like the four pillars of Nationalism were translated into action in different parts of India. The idea of Boycott was kept alive and brought home to every door by articles in newspapers, processions, popular songs, enrolment of volunteers to keep vigilant watch, and by occasional bon-fires of foreign clothes, salt and sugar. The old apparels of foreign make belonging to sundry people were placed in a heap and then it was set on fire. The blazing flames were greeted with shouts of 'Bande Mataram'. Such bonfires were looked upon as a special mode of honouring noted public leaders when they visited any particular locality. Such tours of eminent leaders and the bonfires greeting them were regarded as of great value as a means of infusing enthusiasm for Swadeshi.

© 2012 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction

Boycott means the combine in refusing social or commercial relations with (a person, group, countries etc.) as punishment or coercion. Also refusal to deal with the British manufactured goods. It was meant to exercise economic pressure in the initial stages on the Government. The nationalists realised that the merchants would come to their knees, if hit economically. The partition of Bengal, which had enraged the people against the Government the spirit of boycott to the fore. The story of origin of the word 'Boycott' is very enchanting. It consisted the meaning to refuse, to put away etc. Captain Boycott, a retired English military official was appointed to collect levy in the mines of Mayo county. He was very unkind to pursue in his work i.e., the rent holders of the mines together didn't give him the sufficient food and shelter in that village. He was utterly ousted. Finally, Boycott was returned to England, in December, 1880. By then well organised refusal was called in his name 'Boycott'. It developed into an idea of non-cooperation with the British in every field, and the object aimed at was a political regeneration of the country, with the distant goal of absolute freedom looming large before the eyes of the more advanced section.

The movement spread to the peasant classes, both Hindu and Muslim. At Jalpaiguri, some students made a bonfire of cigarettes, cricket bats, foot-balls, clothes etc., and an effigy of Lord Curzon was also burnt. But these methods didn't prove sufficient for the purpose. So the shops selling foreign goods were picketed by national volunteers. This was the beginning of that system of 'peaceful picketing' which was destined to become a normal feature in almost every type of political agitation in future. The normal procedure of picketing was somewhat as follows: A small band of young men, mostly students, would stand close to the shops where foreign goods were sold. They would approach with folded hands anyone going towards these shops and try to persuade him not to buy foreign goods. If any one was found coming out of these shops

with foreign goods they would request him to return them and get the price back. If the person was willing but the shop-keeper refused to refund the price, the volunteers, would in some cases pay the price themselves and make a bonfire of the foreign article as an example to others.

To anyone acquainted with human nature it should be evident that the procedure was liable to grave abuses. Some hot-headed young men would not remain quiet if the intending or actual purchaser of foreign goods turned down their request, or if the shopkeepers refused to take back the foreign goods already sold. In some cases, at least, there were altercations and high words were exchanged; and, perhaps, in a few cases they let to abuses or even assaults. This would give the police a good opportunity to interfere. The volunteers were roughly handled and if they resisted, the police beat them with lathis. The police lathi was a long and stout stick made of seasoned bamboo, and shod at the lower end with iron tip. Hard blows of a lathi were enough to cause bleeding wounds, fracture of bones and skulls, and even death, depending upon the manner of striking and the particular part of the body struck. These 'Regulation lathis', as they were called, were freely used by the police, in the first instance to drive away the picketers and to disperse crowds, whether riotous or peaceful, if they were supposed to be sympathetic to the picketing volunteers the uttering of Bande Mataram was an indisputable evidence of such sympathy, and later it was made illegal to shout Bande Mataram in a public place.

The Government however, did not depend on these measures alone, but sought to strike at the very root of the matter. As the students supplied the bulk of the volunteers and picketers, the Government issued instructions to the educational institutions to control their boys and prevent them from participating in the Swadeshi movement in any way. This topic will be dealt with in a separate section. It will suffice here to state that students were punished by the institutions to which they belonged as well as by the police. Indiscriminate assaults

were made by the latter upon students and many of them were rusticated or fined. According to a contemporary report, "the chief part of the official wrath against Swadeshi is vented on the students. They are harassed, prosecuted and oppressed for their advocacy of the country's cause. They are being flogged, fined, imprisoned, expelled from schools and colleges and even rusticated from the Universities". The second method was to control the rural markets by influencing the local landlords or zamindars who owned them. They had large interests at stake and could ignore, or disobey, the Government only at their peril. The third method adopted by the Government was setting up the loyal Muslims against the recalcitrant Hindus. The fourth method was to ban the processions and meetings and curb the newspapers by rigorous press laws, for it was rightly thought that the spirit of Swadeshi movement was sustained by propaganda carried in the press and on the platform. The fifth and the last method devised by the Government was the confinement of the leaders of the movement without any trial.

The supporters of the Swadeshi movement, also, had weapons, other than those mentioned above in their armoury. If they were less offensive, they were not always less effective.

As repression increased, a four-fold programme of boycott was preached:

1. Abjuring of English cloth, salt, sugar etc.
2. Abjuring of English speech.
3. Resignation of honorary officers under Government and seats in councils.
4. Social boycott against persons purchasing foreign articles, **which was to take the following forms:**
 - a) None shall eat and drink with them.
 - b) None shall inter-marry with them.
 - c) None shall buy from, or sell to them.
 - d) Depriving them of the service of barbers.
 - e) Boys and girls should be instructed not to play with their children.

The social boycott was a very powerful weapon. A man selling or buying foreign goods or in any way opposing Swadeshi movement and helping Government in putting it down would be subjected to various degrees of humiliation. People would not talk to him, jeer at him from a distance, and his children would be hooted and hissed in schools and playgrounds. His relatives or neighbours would not attend his social ceremonies, his priests, physicians, servants, washer men and barbers would refuse to serve him, and there are even instances where the marriage of his sons and daughters was rendered difficult, if not impossible. Such social ostracism would make a man quite unhappy, sometimes even very miserable, and the Government could do very little to help him in his distress. Reference may be made in this connection to observations made Mr. Stinton, a senior Government official, towards the end of 1907, while discussing the political agitation in Kishor Gunj in the district of Mymen Singh, in a confidential report. "To sum up: During the last two years disaffection has been steadily spreading throughout the whole middle class of educated and semi-educated Hindus. The outbursts which marked the earlier period immediately after the partition have ceased. Prompt punishment and drastic preventive measures have been successful in keeping a show of calm. Under the surface, however, the feelings of resentment and hatred are far more general now than two years ago. The agitation has changed in character and scope. At first it was directed entirely against the partition. Gradually the scope has extended, condemnation of a particular measure grew into execration of all Government measures. The movement revealed its innately seditious characters". The result is that the possibilities of 'Swaraj' in its

extremist sense are freely debated. The ultimate appeal to force is highly discussed by people who have never seen a blow struck in anger and political assassination is in the mouths of schoolboys.

The Effect of Boycott

The long-term and permanent effects of the Boycott and Swadeshi movement were on the industrial regeneration of the state, as in the country. The weaving industry of India and in Karnataka particular received the greatest impetus from the Swadeshi movement. By a systematic and relentless boycott for things of *Swadeshi*, the national movement of 1905 created in the country a tremendous demand for indigenous articles. As the demand for indigenous clothes grew, increasing attempts were being made to start new mills.

Sri Jaya Rao Nargund launched the movement at Bagalkot in 1905. This movement consisted of the boycott of the use of the foreign goods like sugar, kerosene and bangles. Karnataka Vritta of Dharwad reported that "The prohibition pledge has been completely maintained in Bagalkot". People in thousands used to stand to listen to the inspiring lectures delivered by Srinivasa Rao Kaujalgi during the Ganesha Festivals. His lectures, full of emotions, used to inspire the old and youths alike. An incident of an old merchant from Bagalkot removing his clothes and bonfiring them on the spot in the presence of thousand assembled was evidence of the impact exerted by his lecture on the minds of the people. The news of similar bonfiring of the clothes by the people of Galagali were also received.

The students like Ramacharya Katti, Satyavanth Rao Malebennur, Ramachandra Sahasra budde, Ananth Rao Belavadi, Bhimu Devale, Gangaram Painter, Shivappa Patil, Tatyasa Tasaonkar and others were very active in Mudhol. They were all the followers of Hanumanth Rao Kaujalgi, inspired by the poems composed and sung by Hanumanth Rao Kaujalgi they plunged into the movement and undertook the canvassing of the boycott among the rural masses. The poems composed by Hanumanth Rao were all based on the Swadeshi philosophy. He maintained that "the alien goods should be rejected however attractive they may be, for they ruin the economy of the nation, the woman using the sugar prepared of the blood of cow to an embodiment of cruelty, she is like a demon in the middle of menial society, the woman who wears foreign cloth setting aside the Indian saree is like a prostitute".

The students planned to conduct the morning processions in the city. Ramacharya Katti was put at the front of the procession. He was to sing the songs on the Swadeshi spirit in highly rhythmic style where as the people following him was to repeat the songs in the same style of singing. This unique method of popularising the swadeshi spirit was focussed every day at Mudhol in Bijapur District. Besides, this, the volunteers assembling in the busy market places and singing the songs condemning the use of sugar standing in front of the houses where the social functions like marriages and sacred-thread ceremony used to be performed and condemning the use of the foreign cloth and bangles through singing songs wherever the ladies had assembled were used as the techniques of boycotting the foreign goods at the city of Mudhol.

There were some unpleasant incidents of students being beaten by the shopkeepers when these students under the guidance of Hanumanth Rao Kaujalgi attempted picketing in front of the cloth-shops selling the foreign cloth and sweet-meet marts selling the sweet prepared of the sugar. The city of Jamakandi, the headquarters of the state near Mudhol was also very active with Swadeshi movement. Students like Kaka Karkanis and others assumed the leadership of students engaged in popularising the Swadeshi spirit. The group of students from

Jamakandi under the leadership of Karkanis and similar group from Mudhol under the leadership of Hanumanth Rao Kaujalgi were used to meet on every Sunday in a ruined temple at the midway of two cities. They used to rejoice the success of their programmes in the preceding week and after elaborate discussions they used to chalkout the programme for the forthcoming week. The various students were assigned with different responsibilities as per the programme fixed.

During the Dipavali festival of the 1907 this movement assumed greater significance. The students from Mudhol and Jamakandi participating in this movement decided to boycott the use of foreign sugar during the festival. On the day of the festival every resident of Mudhol and Jamakandi was astonished to find a placard denouncing the use of foreign sugar on the day of the Naraka Chaturdashi pasted on their entrance doors. The contents of these placards made the citizens to feel themselves ashamed and were heart touching. Similarly during the Dipavali festival of 1908 the volunteers of Swadeshi movement in one of their meetings resolved to enforce the Swadeshi programme so that the Indian women must wear the bangles of Indian made. The placards directing the gents not to receive the Arathi from the ladies wearing the foreign bangles were found pasted on the doors of every house. Similarly, the placards requesting the ladies not to wear the foreign bangles were also pasted. There were some unpleasant incidents also when some elders scolded the youths refusing to receive Arathi, the elders were convinced about the national programme of the boycott of foreign goods; especially the bangles and that they were committed to this noble principle.

The picketing of the foreign goods as part of the Swadeshi movement was confined to Mudhol and Jamakandi in Bijapur District during the two initial years. Then Kaka Karkanis and his associates decided to take this programme to mofussil areas. To start with, they decided to undertake picketing in front of the shops dealing with foreign goods during the annual Jatra Festivals to be held at Kalhalli and Banahatti. Accordingly, Kaujalgi brothers from Mudhol joined the group of the students from Jamakandi who had decided to conduct picketing in the places mentioned above. Though the number of students participating in the picketing was small, the event exerted profound influence from the point view of the boycott of foreign goods. A trader in bangles gave two women foreign as Indian this morning (10.10.1905), by evening it was noticed that he had deceived them. He was not given any money but received abuse. the Swadeshi movement has received momentum in Dharwad and Belgaum districts. Shri Deshpande, a pleader of Belgaum, is working for its propagation. In Belgaum, along with the swadeshi andolan, prohibition also was advocated. Even liquor was not sold worth four annas where formerly it was sold for ten rupees. In Dharwad Harijans have vowed not to drink toddy. Textile dealers in Belgaum have decided not to import foreign cloth. Grocers in Dharwad have decided not to purchase Daboti and Johnson sugar. Prominent cloth dealers have decided not to purchase foreign goods. In Alnavar people have made a convention that beedi smoking is a country habit and batti smoking (country pipe) is also a good habit. So they have advised all to use battis. Anyone breaking this convention must pay a fine of annas eight. If any one refuses to pay the fine, no one should speak with him for a fortnight.

In a case against nine persons who picketed liquor shops in Belgaum, all of them were awarded one week's imprisonment and fines of Rs.680 in all. A prominent person of Belgaum offered to pay the amount. But all these youths preferred imprisonment. The Swadeshi movement and boycott of foreign goods were going on well in Bagalkot. On 8.8.1908 there was a public meeting Shri Jayarao Nargund, Jainapur, Yalagurdrao, Dharwadkar and others addressed the gathering. It was proposed to establish a "Swadeshi Vyaparottejak Samstha" in Bagalkot. 'Swaraj Samsthas' have been started in Belgaum, Hubli, Bagalkot and Dharwad.

As followed the addressed huge meetings and administered Swadeshi and boycott vows by the national leaders of Swadeshi phase begun the organisation of meetings all over the State of Karnataka and outside. The response of the people was spontaneous, and the repressive measures of the Government transformed the movement into a potential force. Even priests declined to officiate at ceremonies where foreign stuff was intended as an ablution to the gods. The students were the most enthusiastic participating force of the movement. They arranged bonfires of foreign stuff and picketing of shops.

Conclusion:

The boycott of foreign goods went on along with the resurgence of Swadeshi. Foreign cloth was burnt in Ranibennur and other places. Alur Venkatrao says in his autobiography that in many families' people gave up using kerosene oil and began to use only indigenous oil for lamps. Most of the industries died after a few years, of course; but they provide a measure of the political awakening of the people of Karnataka.

References

1. Thomson, Della, (Ed) 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary', Delhi, 1995
2. Dr. Vajpeyi, J.N., 'The extremist Movement in India'.
3. Majumdar, R.C., 'Struggle for freedom', Vol.XI.
4. Kamat, S.U. (Ed), 'Swatantrya Sangramada smritigalu', Vol-I.
5. Karnataka Vritta, dated 9.1.1906
6. Diwakar, R.R., Shresta Patrikodyami Mohare Hanumantharayaru.
7. Diwakar, R.R., 'Karmayogi Hanumantharayaru'.
8. Dr. Kulkarni, Krishnarao Kolhar., Padmashri Kaka Karkaneesaru.
9. Karnataka Vritta, dated 10.10.1905
10. Gubbannavar, Shivanand: Political Ideas of Hardekar Manjappa.
11. Sarkar, Sumit, 'The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1903-1908)'.
12. Baschi, Amiya Kumar, "European and Indian Entrepreneurship in India".
13. Desai, Ashok V., "The original of Parsi Enterprise", Vol.IV.
14. Bipan Chandra, 'The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India', Chapter II.
15. Mukherji, Satischandra, "The Indian Economic Problem".
16. Karnataka Vritt, dated 18.8.1908
17. Datar Hanamanth Rao (Ed), 'Tilakar Hagu Karnatakadalli Swatantryada Horata'.
18. Karnataka Vritt, dated 9.1.1906
19. Gopal, Ram, Tilak and Struggle for Freedom'.
20. "Paisa Fund Silver Jubilee Souvenir".
21. Desai, R.G. Mutalik, "Hukkerikar Ramarayaru".
22. Vadavi, Ramachandra, 'Shri Deshpande Gangadharararu.