

Swadeshi Sangeet and its Influence on the Anti-Partition Movement of Bengal, 1903-1908

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Abstract: *The time of Swadeshi era is one of the major chapter of Bengal's history, also it has a great impact on the struggle for independence of India. The Government announced that partition was to be effected on 16th October, 1905 but it was reunited in 12th December, 1911 after a long protest and struggle. During the years Bengal seen lots of changes in its political, social, economic and cultural spare. The songs which has been written and composed during the time, still has not lost its glory. Still it reminds the past picture of our national struggle of freedom and unity. This paper deals with the Swadeshi or Patriotic songs, in what circumstances these were produced by some of the great songwriters of Bengal and how peoples were influenced by it.*

Key Words: *Swadeshi, Bengal, Independence, Sangeet, Patriotism.*

INTRODUCTION:

Before to know about Swadeshi Sangeet, it is necessary to understand the Swadeshi Movement, but before to understand the Swadeshi Movement, it is obvious to know the meaning of Swadeshi. Literary it is a conjunction of two Sanskrit words: Swa (Self or own) and desh (country). It (Swadeshi) is an adjective that means "of one's own country." The Swadeshi Movement had its genesis in the anti-partition movement which was started to oppose that British decision of partition Bengal (1). The movement was influenced by many historical facts and national as well as international politics, during that time the poets, the song-writers, dramatist, essayist or the other literary figures of Bengal produced high quality of patriotic poems, songs and other types of literature which left a deep influence on the whole people of Bengal. It is for the first time the women, students and a large section of the urban and rural population of Bengal and other parts of India became actively involved (2).

There are some reasons behind the Partition of Bengal. The official reason was that Bengal was too large to be administrated with a population of 78.5 million. The proposals became publicly known in December 1903. The real motive behind the Partition was to weak the nerve centre of Indian nationalism, undoubtedly Calcutta was the nerve centre at that time and Bengalis were the most advanced. It became clear by the words of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy (1899-1905) when he said to dethrone Calcutta from its position as the centre from which the Congress Party is manipulated throughout Bengal, and indeed, the whole of India... And divided the Bengali speaking population (3). The new province Eastern Bengal with Assam would contain a population of 31 million of which 18 million would be Muslims and 12 million Hindus. The remaining portion or the Western Bengal would be having a population of 54 million, 42 million Hindus and 9 million Muslims. No doubt in the new province the Bengali Hindus would be outnumbered by the Muslims and they would be a linguistic minority in the old, which would contain large numbers of Hindi and Oriya speaking population (4). H. H. Risley that understood and therefore he remarked, "Bengal united is power, Bengal divided will pull several different ways (5)."

During 1903 to mid 1905 Bengal seen lots of protests through the moderate techniques like petitions, memoranda, speeches, meetings and propaganda through pamphlets and newspapers but the Government remain unmoved to the

protesters. Rather it was clear by the announcement of 19th July, 1905 that the partition will be effect on 16th October 1905. The day was declared as a day of mourning throughout Bengal and in Calcutta, a hartal was observed. Anandamohan Bose and Rastraguru Surendranath Banerjee addressed two huge mass meetings where 50,000 to 75,000 people gather to listen, 50,000 rupees was raised for the movement within few hours, this was perhaps the largest mass meeting at that time in India (6).

It was in the nineteenth century when the patriotic or Swadeshi songs were first time introduced among the Bengali people. From the Charyapada to Ramprasad's song, in the middle of seven hundred years, there was no patriotic song in Bengali language. Though the social and cultural consciousness were grown in the past but there was a lack of political unity in Bengal as well as in India (7). Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay praise the British for taught the Indians about new concept of ideas and thought. Patriotism grows among the Bengalis through the separate identity notion and established of caste (8). The main reason behind the rise of patriotic feeling in Bengal was not the sick of literature but it were the political and social condition of that time. The British rule and its domination and the exploitation made them to think about their own land. It was the notion of inferiority and pain of subordination that filled the Literature with patriotic feeling (9).

The patriotic feeling rose in the heart of people not only through poetry and literature, it also found expression in songs. It became a new form of Bengali culture. Gita Chattopadhyay divided the Swadeshi songs among three phases. First, the pre-partition of Bengal period, Second, the partition period and third, the post-partition period (10).

The pre-partition period of Swadeshi Sangeet started with the Hindu mela in 1867 but the use of the term "Swadeshi" found in some songs before 1867. Arunkumar Basu said, "We found the Swadeshi word first time in a Brahma Sangeet of Raja Rammohan Roy (11)." His song was,

"Ki Swadesh, ki bideshe jethay tathay thaki,
Tomar rachana modhhe tomake dekhiya daki."

But Swadesh word was used before Rammohan Roy's song when Ramnidhi Gupta wrote,

"Nanan desher nanan bhasha
Bine swadeshio bhasha pure ki asha? (12)"

The first session of Hindumela was occurred in the garden of Dankin Saheb of Belgachiya on 12th April, 1867. That time it was known as Charitra Mela, Nabagopal Mitra was its founder. It was formed to realise India as swadesh (13). Rameshchandra Majumder wrote, "The special feature of the were patriotic songs, poems and lecture, a detailed review of the political, social, economic and religions conditions of India (14). To sing as the opening song Satyendranath Tagore composed his famous song hailed as the first national anthem of India.

"Mile sobe Bharat santan
Ektan monopran
Gao Bharater jashogaan."

It was sang from the second session to 1880 as the opening song. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay praise the song very much as great Sangeet and wish to spread its fragrance all over India, in the Himalaya, in the shore of Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu, Narmada and Godavari, in the deep sound of seas of East and West, in the heart of twenty crores people of India (15).

Some songs were composed to define the sadness of India, specially its political and social inferiority. Dwijendranath Tagore's

“Malin mukhochandrima Bharat tomari
Ratri din korichhe lochan bari.”

And Gaganindranath Tagore's

“Lojjay Bharatjoshho gaibi ki kore,
Luthiteche pore ei ratner akore.”

are famous. In the first song Swadesh was seen as a woman with her pale face, the second song shows the foreigners are looting India. In 1892, Atulprasad Sen wrote his famous song “Uthogo Bharatlakshmi, utho adi jogotjan puja”, in 1896, Rabindranath himself was sang “Bande Maataram” in the twelfth session of the Congress in Calcutta, from that time the song became popular as a Swadeshi Sangeet and later as a mantra of revolutionaries. In 1902, a song of Saraladevi Choudhurani was sang in the Congress session

“Banga, Bihar, Utkal, Madras, Marath
Gurjar, Punjab, Rajputan
Hindu, Parsi, Jain, Isai, Sikh, Musalman
Gao sokol konthe sokol bhashe namo Hindu”

This was among the first song where every caste and religion was asked to make a unity among them. This song became very popular at that time.

The Second phase of Swadeshi Sangeet started from the announcement of the partition of Bengal. This announcement was shocked the whole Bengal and everywhere people rejected it through their ability. One of the main form of express the dissatisfaction was song. Ramesh Chandra Majumder wrote, “The new born patriotism and national sentiments found expression in, and were deeply stimulated by a number of beautiful national songs which have survived to the present day (16).”

Undoubtedly the songs which were written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore, was the best and most popular among of all. Though his songs were the outcome of the partition but there were little political facts than the great experience of Swadesh (17). Tagore wrote “Amra milechhi aj mayer dake” and “aoi bhuponomonohini” in the pre-partition era but these songs were not lost their relevance in the partition period.

In some songs, Tagore expressed the beauty of Bengal with devotion honour, among the various songs

“O amar desher mati tomar pore thekai matha
Tomate bishwamoyi tomate bishwa mayer achol pata”

was famous. In this song Tagore seen his Swadesh as a part of the world, his patriotism was not the mere nationalism, but an philanthropic approach (18). Another famous song which later became the national song of Bangladesh “Amar Sonar Bangla” and “Aji Bangladesher hridoy hote” are the song where the beauty of Bengal rightly expressed. Rabindranath not only described the beauty of Bengal or its natural environment, in some songs he called the Indians to concentrate in the work of Swadesh, sometimes his quotes were became the path founder or founded new ways for the national movement as well as for revolutionary movement. He sang

“Jodi tor dak shune keu na ase tobe ekla chalo re
Ekla chalo, ekla chalo, ekla chalo, ekla chalo re.”

Not only with the high philosophic lyrics but also with the pure tune and music, the songs go ahead from his times. Rabindranath started Rakhi Bandhan utsab on 16th October 1905, that day everyone bathed in the deep Ganga and tied rakhi on others hand as the symbol of unity among all caste and religion. Abanindranath Tagore observed that everyone gathered in the march against the anti-partition of Bengal where all the people sang (19)

“Banglar mati, banglar jol,
Banglar baayu, banglar phal
Punyo hauk punyo hauk punyo hauk hey bhagoban.”

That day after the lecture of Anandamohan Basu people marched through the various roads of Calcutta and sang Tagore’s “Bidhir badhon katbe tumi”, in this song Tagore rebuked the English rule for its inhuman activity (20).

The dramatist and poet Dwijendralal Roy composed a large number of Swadeshi Sangeet which had deep influence over people. He used his own rhythms and words for praise motherland. His most famous songs were “Dhano Dhanya Pushpo Bhora”, “Bongo Amar, Janani Amar”, “Jedin sunil jaladhi hoite uthile janani Bhadatbarsh” etc. Another famous songwriter of the age was Rajanikanta Sen, who with his simple and wonderful description of the Swadeshi Movement influenced the people extremely. His most famous song was

“Mayer Deoya Mota Kapor Mathay Tule Nere Bhai
Dindukhini Ma je Toder tar Beshi Ar Sadhho Nai”

Ramendrasundar Tribedi wrote after some days of the partition of Bengal some young men walked through the Cornwallis Street without shoes and singing the above song (21). Atulprasad Sen wrote thirteen Swadeshi Sangeet, almost all are famous. He hoped India will again lead the world, he said in his song, “Bharat abar jogot sovay sreshtho ason lobe”. His love for the mother tongue can be seen in the song “Moder Gorob, Moder Asha, A mori Bangla Bhasha”, which is still popular and famous. There were many songwriter who at the time composed songs for the Swadesh. Among such Mukunda Das, Ashwinikumar Dutt, Pramath Nath Roychowdhury, Kaliprasany Kabyabisarad, Kamini Roy were most notable.

The stream of Swadeshi Sangeet in the third phase or the post-partition period of Bengal became low. Some great composers were died and who were alive, willing not to write patriotic songs. The political and nationalistic feelings were changed and new forms of activity were introduced. Kaji Nazrul Islam was the most famous songwriter of the time whose songs became popular among the revolutionaries. His “Kantar Moru, Dustor parabar”, “Karar oi Louhokopat, venge fel kor re lipat” were the key songs of revolution.

CONCLUSION:

The Swadeshi Movement's era is one of the glorious times in the history of Bengal where Bengali Patriotism found their wings in every spare, viz. Songs, literature, science, culture, art etc. Sri Arabindo regarded the partition of Bengal as the greatest blessing that had ever happened to India. No other measure could have stirred national feeling to deeply or roused it so suddenly from the lethargy to previous years (22). The Swadeshi Sangeet were the outcome of the circumstances of the time. Polity and Economy was its main feature. Another feature of the songs was to glorifying India’s past history, the ancient times India when this land found God’s blessing and present day condition.

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