

Hasrat Mohani: An Initial Experiment in Swadeshi

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Abstract:

Hasrat's view of Swadeshi was something different. According to him, Swadeshi meant anything manufactured in the country. He took the same stand point about cloth. Opposing the ideas of other national leaders he very firmly said that Indian mill-made cloth was just as much Swadeshi as Khaddar and that it was not right to regard hand-woven cloth alone as Swadeshi. In his view goods produced with indigenous labour and material were Swadeshi even if foreign finance was behind their manufacture. To bring this view point into action he published an advertisement in November, 1909 issue of Urdu-i Mualla on a full page for padlock manufactured in the factory of Mr. Sparling at Aligarh. Obviously this was an English concern making padlock. This step seems an apparent contradiction to radically nationalist views. But as matter of fact this advertisement was a clear evidence of his stand.

The beginning of twentieth century witnessed drastic changes and new trends in political environment in the Indian subcontinent. The Congress, which had so far adopted liberal and loyal attitude towards the British Government by demanding constitutional reforms and representation of Indians in civil as well as other Government service was moving towards extremism. It now raised its voice for Swaraj. The Self-Government resolution was passed in this regard in its Calcutta Session of 1906 held under the Presidentship of moderate leader Dada Bhai Naoroji.¹ It was after the Partition of Bengal that in order to weaken the Government and awaken the people to the usefulness of Swadeshi manufactured commodities, the Congress launched a movement known as the 'Swadeshi movement' throughout the country. Hasrat Mohani enthusiastically supported this Swadeshi movement. It was during his school days that one of his teachers

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¹. A.M. Zaidi, *INC the Glorious Tradition*, vol. I: 1885-1920, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1987, p. 278.