



Swadeshi Movement and Self -Reliant India

For Prelims: [Swadeshi Movement](#), [National Handloom Day](#), Partition of Bengal, [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#), [Make in India](#)

For Mains: Significance and impact of the Swadeshi Movement in India's freedom struggle, Relevance of Swadeshi ideals in India's economic policies, [Make in India](#)

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

Every year on **7th August**, India celebrates [National Handloom Day](#), which marks the launch of the [Swadeshi Movement](#) on this day in 1905.

- The movement promoted indigenous industries, with a special focus on handloom weaving, as a means of economic resistance to British colonial rule.

National Handloom Day

- The day was officially declared by the Government of India in **2015** to honour the handloom community and their contribution.
- It highlights handlooms as a pillar of rural economy, women's empowerment, and sustainable, eco-friendly production.
- **National Handloom Day Theme 2025: "Weaving Innovation into Tradition."**

What was the Swadeshi Movement?

- **Origins of the Swadeshi Movement:**
 - **Partition of Bengal:** The **Partition of Bengal (1905)** into Muslim-majority East Bengal and Hindu-majority West Bengal was seen as a British tactic to create religious and political divisions, weakening nationalist unity.
 - **Lord Curzon's Policies:** [Lord Curzon's](#) repressive policies, like reforms in Calcutta Corporation and the **Indian Universities Act (1904)**, fueled middle-class anger and discontent.
 - **Calcutta Townhall meeting:** The August **1905 Calcutta Townhall** meeting formally launched the **Swadeshi Movement**, urging people to boycott British goods especially the '**Manchester -made-cloth**' and the '**Liverpool-salt**', and support Indian-made products.
- **Key Methods of the Swadeshi Movement:**
 - **Boycott of British Goods:** Encouraged the Indian masses to boycott British goods and promote **Swadeshi (domestic) products** to promote economic self-reliance by

supporting local industries and crafts.

- **National Education:** The boycott of British schools led to the founding of national schools focused on Indian values.
 - The **1905 Carlyle Circular** threatened to withdraw scholarships from protesting students, causing many to leave British institutions.
 - In 1906, the **National Council of Education** was formed, resulting in the later establishment of the **Bengal National College and the Bengal Technical Institute**.
- **Formation of Samitis:** Various volunteer organizations, known as samitis, were formed to propagate the Swadeshi message.
 - The **Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, led by Ashwini Kumar Dutta** in Barisal, became a powerful tool for mass mobilization.
- **Use Traditional Popular Festivals and Melas:** Festivals like Ganapati and Shivaji were used to spread Swadeshi messages across India, including Bengal.
 - **Rabindranath Tagore** used **Raksha Bandhan** as a symbol of unity to oppose the 1905 Bengal partition.
- **Emphasis on Self-Reliance:** The movement promoted '**Atma Shakti**' (self-strength), linking national dignity with social reforms like fighting caste oppression, early marriage, dowry, and alcohol abuse.
- **Phases of Swadeshi Movement:**
 - **Moderate Phase:** The movement began with moderates using petitions and meetings but shifted to radical methods after these efforts failed.
 - Leaders like **Surendranath Banerjee** supported the movement as a means to promote self-reliance.
 - **Radical Phase:** Leaders like **Bipin Chandra Pal**, **Lala Lajpat Rai**, and **Bal Gangadhar Tilak**, part of the **Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate**, pushed for direct confrontation with the British.
 - They expanded the movement into a call for **Swaraj (self-rule)** advocating boycott of British goods, institutions, and services, and supported both passive resistance and armed struggle.
- **Impact:**
 - **Indian National Congress (INC):** It condemned Bengal's partition and supported the **Swadeshi Movement**. In the **1906 Calcutta session**, under Dadabhai Naoroji, INC declared **Swaraj as its goal**.
 - The Moderate-Extremist dispute over the movement's pace and methods led to a **party split at the 1907 Surat session**.
 - **Social:** Rabindranath Tagore wrote '**Amar Sonar Bangla**', which later became Bangladesh's national anthem and united Bengalis against Bengal's partition.
 - Artists like **Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose** enriched Indian art and cultural pride.
 - The movement aimed for **Swaraj through boycott and passive resistance**, needing mass awakening and participation. Support came mainly from the **educated middle class, aristocrats, and merchants**, while many peasants and workers remained less involved.
 - **Women played a vital role** by boycotting British goods and promoting local crafts.
 - **Impact on British rule:** India witnessed a significant decline in foreign imports from 1905 to 1908. It pressured the British to introduce **Morley-Minto Reforms (1909)** which aimed to address growing Indian demands for greater representation.
 - The Swadeshi Movement boosted Indian industries like handloom and textiles, leading to new enterprises such as Bengal Chemicals and Lakshmi Cotton Mills.
 - Politically, it shifted focus from **petitions to demanding Swaraj**, fueling revolutionary activism.
 - It also strengthened nationalism by promoting pride, unity, and self-reliance against colonial rule.
- **Annulment of Partition of Bengal:** In 1911 **Lord Hardinge** annulled the Partition of Bengal primarily to stop the rising tide of **revolutionary terrorism and unrest in the region**.

What is the Contemporary Relevance of the Swadeshi Movement in

India?

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat:** The Swadeshi Movement's ideals are revived through the [Self-reliant India \(Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan\) mission](#) which aims to promote **Indian goods globally and achieve self-reliance**.
 - Launched during the pandemic with a Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus (~10% of GDP), it focuses on themes like **'local for global' and 'vocal for local.'**
 - Key goals include making India a global supply chain hub, boosting private sector trust, supporting Indian manufacturers, and expanding exports in agriculture, textiles, clothing, jewelry, pharma and defence.
- **Make in India Initiative:** It promotes India as a **global manufacturing hub**, encouraging local and foreign companies to **produce domestically**, echoing the Swadeshi Movement's focus on self-sufficiency and local industry.
 - [Make in India](#) improved ease of doing business, boosting FDI from USD 45 billion in 2015 to USD 81.04 billion in FY 2024-25.
 - **Exports hit USD 437 billion in 2024**, with pharmaceuticals supplying 60% of the world's vaccines.
 - Defense exports grew, and India rose to [39th in the 2024 Global Innovation Index](#).
 - 'Made in Bihar' boots have been incorporated into the Russian Army's equipment.
 - The [Production Linked Incentive \(PLI\)](#) schemes aim to enhance domestic manufacturing and boost exports by covering 14 key sectors.
- **Revival of Khadi and Cottage Industries:** Khadi movement, a **socio-cultural narrative**, was launched by **Gandhiji** promoted the use of **Swadeshi products and urged boycotting foreign goods**, remains relevant today, with [KVIC \(Khadi and Village Industries Commission\)](#) achieving significant growth in turnover.
 - Over the past 11 years (2013-2025), KVIC production rose by 347% and sales by 447%. Employment grew by 49.23%, providing jobs to 1.94 crore individuals.
- **Economic Nationalism and Protectionism:** Rooted in the Swadeshi Movement, prioritizes domestic industries through **import substitution, trade tariffs, and incentives for Indian companies**.
 - These policies aim to reduce dependency on global supply chains, especially in critical sectors like defense, healthcare, and energy.

Role of Handloom Sector in India's Economy

- **Economic Significance:** The handloom sector is the largest **cottage industry** in India, employing over **35 lakh** workers, many of whom are women.
 - **72%** of handloom weavers are women, providing them with **economic independence**.
- **Sustainable Living:** Handloom products are **eco-friendly, support rural livelihoods, and empower women**, all while preserving India's cultural heritage.
- **Export:** India is the **world's largest producer** of handwoven fabric, accounting for **95%** of global handloom output.
 - India's major handloom exports include **mats, carpets, rugs, bedsheets, cushion covers, and silk scarves**.
 - India exported handloom cotton yarn, fabrics, and made-ups worth about **USD 10.94 billion in FY23**. In FY24, exports went to over 20 countries, with the **US as the largest importer**, followed by the UAE, Spain, the UK, France, and Italy.

India's Initiatives Related to Handloom

- **National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP):** Promotes sustainable growth by providing raw materials, design support, technology upgrades, marketing assistance, and infrastructure like Urban Haats.
- **Raw Material Supply Scheme (RMSS):** Ensures quality yarn at subsidized rates, reimburses freight charges, and offers a 15% yarn subsidy to help handloom weavers compete with power-looms.
- **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY):** Offers low-interest loans to weavers.
- **Workshed Scheme:** Provides dedicated workspace near the weaver's home for the entire family.

Each unit costs Rs 1.2 lakh. Marginalized weavers get 100% financial aid and others receive 75%.

- **Protecting Traditional Designs:** Under the [Geographical Indication \(GI\) Act, 1999](#), a total of 104 handloom products have been registered for GI.
- **GeM:** Around 1.8 lakh weavers onboarded on [Government e-Marketplace \(GeM\)](#).
- **Welfare Measures:** Social security is provided via **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJY)**, [Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana \(PMSBY\)](#) and converged [Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana \(MGBBY\)](#)

Drishti Mains Question:

What is the contemporary relevance of the Swadeshi Movement's ideas in India's current economic strategies?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements : (2023)

Statement-I: 7th August is declared as the National Handloom Day.

Statement-II: It was in 1905 that the Swadeshi Movement was launched on the same day.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Ans: (a)

Q. With reference to the Swadeshi Movement, consider the following statements: (2019)

1. It contributed to the revival of the indigenous artisan crafts and industries.
2. The National Council of Education was established as a part of the Swadeshi Movement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movement. **(2020)**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/swadeshi-movement-and-self-reliant-india>

