ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND THE CONTEMPORARY 'MAKE IN INDIA' INITIATIVE

Radha Kumari

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra26627
DOI No: 10.36713/epra26627

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the historical background and relationship between the Swadeshi Movement and the contemporary "Make in India" initiative in India. The Swadeshi Movement emerged during the freedom struggle as an economic and nationalist movement promoting indigenous goods and discouraging foreign products. It gained prominence during the anti-Partition of Bengal movement in 1905 and encouraged self-reliance. In modern times, the Government of India launched the "Make in India" initiative in 2014 to promote manufacturing, attract investment, and generate employment. This study uses a historical and analytical approach to compare both initiatives. It finds that despite differences in context, both aim to strengthen economic self-reliance and promote domestic production in India.

KEYWORDS: *Swadeshi Movement, Make in India, self-reliance, economic nationalism, Indian industry, industrial*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Swadeshi* has played a significant role in India's economic and social development. The term "Swadeshi" refers to the use of goods produced within the country and reducing dependence on foreign products. This idea was not limited to economic policy but was also closely associated with national consciousness, self-reliance, and the struggle for independence. The Swadeshi Movement emerged as an important mass movement during India's freedom struggle. It gained widespread momentum particularly during the opposition to the Partition of Bengal in 1905. The main objective of this movement was to boycott foreign goods, promote indigenous industries, and develop a sense of economic self-reliance among the people. Several national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Rabindranath Tagore played a crucial role in spreading the idea of Swadeshi among the masses. The movement encouraged Indian industries, cottage industries, and handicrafts, and inspired people to have confidence in the country's productive capacity. Even after independence, the concept of self-reliance and promotion of domestic production continued to remain significant in India's economic policies.

Extending this ideology into the modern context, the Government of India launched the "Make in India" initiative in 2014. The objective of this initiative is to develop India as a strong global manufacturing hub, attract foreign investment, strengthen domestic industries, and generate large-scale employment opportunities (Naik, 2019). Although "Make in India" is based on modern technology, innovation, and global competitiveness, its core philosophy reflects the same spirit of self-reliance and indigenous production that was evident during the Swadeshi Movement. Thus, a historical and ideological connection can be observed between the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative. The main objective of this research paper is to study the historical background of the Swadeshi Movement and to understand how its ideology is reflected in the contemporary "Make in India" initiative. The study also presents a comparative analysis of the objectives, approaches, and socio-economic impacts of both initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several historians and researchers have studied the Swadeshi Movement and the idea of economic self-reliance in India. These studies indicate that the Swadeshi Movement was not merely a political movement but was also deeply associated with economic nationalism and the spirit of self-reliance. Renowned historian Bipan Chandra, in his book *India's Struggle for Independence*, states that the Swadeshi Movement was a significant phase of the Indian freedom struggle, which promoted the boycott of foreign goods and the development of indigenous industries **(Chandra, 1989).** According to him, the movement strengthened economic nationalism and national consciousness in Indian society.

Similarly**, Sumit Sarkar**, in his book *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903–1908*, provides a detailed analysis of the historical development and socio-economic impact of the movement. He explains that the movement, which began as a protest against the Partition of Bengal, gradually spread across the country and fostered a sense of self-reliance among the people **(Sarkar, 1973).**

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, in *From Plassey to Partition and After*, examines the growth of Indian nationalism and identifies the Swadeshi Movement as an important example of economic nationalism. According to him, the movement played a crucial role in promoting Indian industries and local production **(Bandyopadhyay, 2004).**

In addition, Tara Chand, in *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, highlights that the Swadeshi Movement strengthened national unity and self-respect among Indians **(Chand, 1988).**

In the modern context, several scholars have analyzed the "Make in India" initiative. For instance, **Shekhar Naik**, in his study *Genesis of Make in India: A Study of Swadeshi*

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

Movement, argues that the ideology of "Make in India" is closely linked to the historical thought of the Swadeshi Movement **(Naik, 2019).** According to this study, both initiatives aim to promote domestic production and strengthen economic self-reliance in India.

These studies clearly indicate that both the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative are important in the context of India's economic self-reliance and industrial development. However, there is still a need for further research on the historical relationship and ideological continuity between the two. This forms the main objective of the present study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper adopts a qualitative and historical-analytical research methodology. The primary objective of the study is to analyze the historical background of the Swadeshi Movement and to understand how its ideology is reflected in the contemporary "Make in India" initiative in India. The study is mainly based on secondary sources. It includes an analysis of books by various historians, research papers, government reports, and academic articles. In particular, the works of historians such as Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, and Tara Chand have been used to understand the historical context of the Swadeshi Movement. Additionally, government documents and research studies related to the "Make in India" initiative have also been examined. This study employs both descriptive and comparative methods. The descriptive method is used to present the historical background, objectives, and features of the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative. The comparative method is used to analyze the similarities and differences between the two initiatives.

The purpose of this research is to understand how the ideology of the Swadeshi Movement remains relevant in India's economic policies and how it is being carried forward in a modern context through the "Make in India" initiative.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the historical background of the Swadeshi Movement.
2. To study the main objectives and ideas of the Swadeshi Movement.
3. To examine the objectives and significance of the "Make in India" initiative.
4. To understand the relationship between the Swadeshi Movement and "Make in India."
5. To analyze the concept of self-reliance in India through both initiatives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What was the historical background of the Swadeshi Movement?
2. What were the main objectives and ideas of the Swadeshi Movement?
3. Why was the "Make in India" initiative introduced?
4. What is the relationship between the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative?
5. What has been the impact of these two initiatives on India's economic self-reliance?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

The Swadeshi Movement was a very significant phase of India's freedom struggle **(Chandra, 1989).** It was not limited to political independence alone but also aimed at promoting economic, social, and cultural self-reliance in India. The term "Swadeshi" refers to the use of goods produced within the country and reducing dependence on foreign products. This movement strengthened the spirit of national consciousness and self-respect among the Indian people **(Chand, 1988).** The Swadeshi Movement began primarily in 1905 in opposition to the Partition of Bengal **(Sarkar, 1973).** At that time, India was under British rule, and the British government divided Bengal on administrative grounds. However, Indian leaders and the public perceived it as a policy of "divide and rule." In protest against this decision, a widespread movement emerged across the country, which came to be known as the Swadeshi Movement. The main objective of this movement was to boycott foreign goods and promote the use of indigenous products **(Bandyopadhyay, 2004).** People were encouraged to stop using British goods and instead adopt Indian textiles and local products. In many places, foreign clothes were publicly burned as a symbol of boycott. Along with this, efforts were made to promote Indian industries, cottage industries, and handicrafts.

Several prominent national leaders played an important role in the Swadeshi Movement. Leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Rabindranath Tagore inspired people to adopt Swadeshi goods. Through their speeches, writings, and social activities, they spread national awareness among the masses. Later, Mahatma Gandhi also promoted the idea of Swadeshi and emphasized khadi and cottage industries as the foundation of a self-reliant India. The impact of the Swadeshi Movement was not limited to the economic sphere but also extended to social and educational fields. During this period, several national educational institutions were established with the aim of providing education based on Indian values and culture. The movement also strengthened self-confidence and self-respect among the people. Furthermore, the Swadeshi Movement contributed significantly to the development of Indian industries. People began supporting local industries, handicrafts, and small businesses, which gave a new direction to the Indian economy. It also created a sense of belief among people that India could become self-reliant through its own resources and labor. Thus, the Swadeshi Movement was not merely a boycott of foreign goods but a crucial step toward India's economic independence and self-reliance. It strengthened the spirit of indigenous production, local industries, and national pride in Indian society. This ideology later influenced modern economic policies in India, and its reflection can be seen in initiatives such as "Make in India." Therefore, it can be concluded that the spirit of self-reliance generated by the Swadeshi Movement continues to play an important role in India's economic development and policies even today.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

MAKE IN INDIA INITIATIVE: OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Launch of the Initiative

The "Make in India" initiative is a major economic program launched by the Government of India on 25 September 2014 (Government of India, 2014). The primary objective of this initiative is to develop India as a strong global manufacturing hub. Through this program, the government has aimed to promote the establishment of industries in the country and create a favorable environment for investment.

2. Promotion of Industrial Development

One of the key objectives of this initiative is to strengthen India's industrial sector. For a long time, the service sector in India has grown significantly, while the manufacturing sector has remained relatively underdeveloped. "Make in India" seeks to enhance production capacity and encourage the establishment of new industries.

3. Attraction of Foreign Investment

An important objective of the "Make in India" initiative is to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The government has simplified investment-related regulations and increased FDI limits in several sectors. This has encouraged international companies to establish industries in India.

4. Generation of Employment Opportunities

India has a large youth population, making employment generation a significant challenge. The establishment of new industries and factories under the "Make in India" initiative is expected to create more job opportunities, thereby strengthening the country's economic condition.

5. Development of Key Industrial Sectors

The initiative covers approximately 25 key sectors, including automobiles, electronics, textiles, information technology, defense manufacturing, railways, and pharmaceuticals.

Table 1: Major Industrial Sectors under Make in India

S. No.	Industrial Sector
1	Automobiles
2	Auto Components
3	Chemicals Industry
4	Information Technology and BPM
5	Electronic Systems
6	Pharmaceuticals
7	Textiles and Apparel
8	Defense Manufacturing
9	Railways
10	Tourism and Hospitality

Source: Based on Government of India, Make in India Initiative (2014).

The above table clearly indicates that the "Make in India" initiative includes a wide range of industrial sectors aimed at strengthening India's manufacturing capacity. The development of these sectors is expected to enhance the country's overall industrial capabilities.

6. Self-Reliance and Local Production

One of the key objectives of "Make in India" is to promote local production. The initiative emphasizes improving the quality and competitiveness of products manufactured in India. It aims to transform India from merely a consumer market into a major production hub.

7. Innovation and Skill Development

The initiative also gives significant importance to innovation and skill development. The government has focused on training youth according to industry requirements and encouraging the adoption of new technologies. This helps in improving India's production capacity and global competitiveness.

8. Contribution to Economic Growth

The "Make in India" initiative has the potential to accelerate India's economic growth. By promoting industries, increasing investment, and generating employment opportunities, it contributes to strengthening the national economy. Thus, "Make in India" has become an important component of India's modern economic policy, promoting indigenous production, industrial development, and the spirit of self-reliance.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND MAKE IN INDIA

1. Similarity in Objectives

Both the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative share a common objective of promoting indigenous production and reducing dependence on foreign goods. During the Swadeshi Movement, people were encouraged to boycott foreign goods and use Indian products. Similarly, the "Make in India" initiative emphasizes increasing domestic production and strengthening local industries.

2. Spirit of Self-Reliance

The concept of self-reliance is central to both initiatives. The Swadeshi Movement instilled confidence among people that India could become self-reliant through its own resources and labor. In the same way, the "Make in India" initiative aims to make India economically strong and self-sufficient.

3. Historical and Modern Context

The Swadeshi Movement emerged during the freedom struggle as a protest against British rule, aiming to reduce the influence of foreign goods and governance. In contrast, "Make in India" is a modern economic initiative designed to strengthen India's industrial capacity in a globally competitive environment.

4. Difference in Approach

The Swadeshi Movement was primarily a mass movement, where people themselves actively boycotted foreign goods and adopted indigenous products. On the other hand, "Make in India" is a government-led initiative implemented through policies, programs, and investment promotion.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 3| March2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

5. Economic Impact
The Swadeshi Movement promoted Indian industries, cottage industries, and handicrafts, and raised economic awareness among people. In contrast, the "Make in India" initiative focuses on modern industries, advanced technology, and large-scale production to strengthen the Indian economy.

6. Contribution to National Development
Both initiatives aim to promote national development and economic strength. The Swadeshi Movement strengthened national unity and self-reliance during the freedom struggle, whereas the "Make in India" initiative contributes to modern economic growth and industrial development.

Thus, although the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative belong to different historical periods, both reflect a common ideology—promoting self-reliant India and encouraging indigenous production.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" Initiative

Aspect	Swadeshi Movement	Make in India Initiative
Time Period	Around 1905, during opposition to the Partition of Bengal	Launched in 2014 by the Government of India
Nature	Mass movement	Government initiative
Main Objective	Boycott of foreign goods and promotion of indigenous products	To make India a global manufacturing hub
Economic Approach	Promotion of cottage industries and local production	Focus on modern industries and large-scale production
Leadership	Led by national leaders and the public	Led by the Government of India and policymakers
Impact	Strengthened national consciousness and self-reliance	Promotes industrial development and employment generation

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on Chandra (1989), Sarkar (1973), and Naik (2019).

The above table clearly shows that although the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative emerged in different historical contexts, both share the common objective of promoting self-reliance and indigenous production in India.

CONCLUSION

The Swadeshi Movement was an important part of India's freedom struggle, which strengthened the spirit of national consciousness and self-reliance among the people. The main objective of this movement was to boycott foreign goods and promote the use of indigenous products. It encouraged Indian industries, cottage industries, and handicrafts, and enhanced people's confidence in the country's resources and productive capacity. In the modern context, the "Make in India" initiative represents a new form of the same spirit of self-reliance. This initiative aims to develop India into a strong manufacturing hub, attract investment, and generate employment opportunities. Through this program, the government seeks to promote industrial development and strengthen India's position in the global economy.

Although the Swadeshi Movement and the "Make in India" initiative were launched in different historical circumstances, their core philosophy remains the same. Both emphasize promoting indigenous production, strengthening economic self-reliance, and advancing national development. The study clearly indicates that the historical ideology of the Swadeshi Movement continues to influence India's economic policies even today. The "Make in India" initiative is a modern expression of this ideology, representing a significant step toward building a self-reliant and economically strong India. Therefore, it can be concluded that the spirit of the Swadeshi Movement remains relevant and continues to serve as a guiding principle for modern India's development.

REFERENCES

1. *Bandyopadhyay, S. (2004). From Plassey to Partition and After: A History of Modern India. Orient Longman.*
2. *Chandra, B., Mukherjee, M., Mukherjee, A., Panikkar, K. N., & Mahajan, S. (1989). India's Struggle for Independence. Penguin Books.*
3. *Naik, S. (2019). Genesis of Make in India: A Study of Swadeshi Movement. International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology, 6(2), 364–367. https://ijirt.org/publishedpaper/IJIRT150364_PAPER.pdf*
4. *Sarkar, S. (1973). The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908. People's Publishing House.*
5. *Chand, T. (1988). History of the Freedom Movement in India (Vol. 2). Publication Division, Government of India.*
6. *Government of India. (2014). Make in India Initiative. https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major_initiatives/make-in-india/*
7. *Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2024). Swadeshi Movement. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Swadeshi-Movement*
8. *Odisha Review. (2005). The Swadeshi Movement. Government of Odisha. https://magazines.odisha.gov.in/orissareview/aug2005/engpdf/the%20swadeshi%20movement.pdf*