



National Fund And The Growth of Nationalism In Karnataka



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The collection of money for the so-called National Fund was highly instrumental in popularising the ideas of swadeshism in Karnataka like in Tamil Nadu, Southern India. According to Subramania Iyer, who visited many cities and villages in Southern India. The collection was taken up in the most remote settlements, and everywhere the people grasped the importance and full scope of the movement with a readiness and intelligence hitherto unsuspected by our public men living in large centres of educated thought.¹

The ordinary people considered it a good patriotic cause. In Bombay, Tilak, assisted by leading Indian Industrialists including Tata, organised the "Swadeshi Co-operative Stores". Tilak was made the treasurer of a special fund (the Paisa Fund) established in 1905 to promote industrial production.²

The Industrial or paisa Fund can be defined as a central reserve made up of contributions of one paise and above from all classes of society. People paying a reasonable minimum could have a voice in its administration which was in the hands of an elected body. At one of the public meetings, held for the collection of the Fund, Lokamanya Tilak said "come all, join and subscribe; I do not want one man to contribute thousand rupees to the paisa Fund, but I want a thousand contributors each giving one rupee and making up a thousand". Such a spirit of contribution will show me that there are more men who take real interest in the welfare of their country. It will demonstrate an organised effort. A man who contributes a thousand at a stroke has nothing further in his head, nothing higher in his mind than a looming fact dividend. The thousand poor contributors have a nobler aim. So rally round all men and subscribe your humble paisa".³ Such was the ideal of the Tilak.

The "Paisa Fund Glass Works" factory was founded by Antaji Damodar Kale, on 16th October, 1905 at Talegaon, Bombay. This Glass works factory had the Karnataka members and workers in plenty of numbers. Some of them were V.N. Jog, a well known pleader and Member of Legislative Council of Karnataka (Later period), Dharwad, V.G. Pandit, one of the patrons of Paisa Fund Glass Works Factory; Talegaon was from Belgaum, G.D. Deshpande of Dharwad and others. Such the paisa Fund National

Industry had been celebrated the centenary (1905-2005). The life of the paisa Fund can be divided into seven well marked periods (1905-1935) each marking a different phase of its career. Excluding the years 1898 to 1905 which were spent in preparing the ground and popularising the idea with propaganda.⁴

The Paisa Fund begin with the year 1905-06 when the Fund was formally registered at the office of The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, under Act XXI of 1860. Its constitution decided upon, propaganda set afoot and force of volunteers mobilised for collection.⁵ Village committees were recognised when there were in the village at least ten people each paying annas eight per year. Members of these were eligible for election into the Central Committee as were members of the first three classes shown above. The central committee was the executive body vested with full powers for the proper utilisation of the Fund. The purpose of the paisa Fund was to collect money in any amounts down to paisa one from all classes of society and to use it strictly according to the rules of the institution, towards the revival of agriculture, trade and crafts of this country and the improvement of the economic condition of the people. Once however, Tilak sponsored the cause, he took it upon himself to give wide publicity to the Fund through the columns of his papers, and public opinion gradually brought round.

Some members were in favour of small industries like buttons, oils or brushes and it was suggested that Prof. Gajjar's laboratory should be taken advantage of for the necessary training. There was also a suggestion from the Dhulia Town Committee to start an Industrial Training School in Poona; but ultimately the committee decided upon glass and in January 1908, building construction for the factory was begun at Talegaon.⁶ Many other industrial and commercial organisations have been started during 1905-1911 in the Deccan, but, the backbone of them all has been Swadeshi. Many of these ventures are on the anvil of trial and experiment. If they fail, the consolation will be in the fact that we are worse off than many other bigger industries, which are still in a precarious condition though supported by the props of protective tariffs, unlimited funds, and the highest available intelligence. The Government Porcelain

Factory, Mysore, the Government Soap Factory, Bangalore, the Deccan Glass Works, Begumpeth, Hyderabad were established on the Swadeshi lines. Considering this, the paisa fund and its industrial activity in the shape of its Glass works is indeed a source of satisfaction.

The occupation of silk weaving turned as an industry at Peeranawadi near Belgaum. "The Southern Maratha Slabs Factory" was already existed before 1905, at Khanapur in Belgaum district. A cloth factory was begun at Bellary. "Bharat Mill" was started in Hubli. The cloth factories were opened at Gadag, Phulgaon and other places. But few years later they were stopped due to paucity of skilled technicians.⁷ In 1908, Jayarao Naragund, Govindarao Chhabbi and others started a company in the name of "Krishi Karmottejaka Mandala" at Bagalkot. And they had taken a lead to start the "Indigenous Sugar Factory" at Menasagi in Ron Taluk. On that condition with the help of Venkatrao Alur, Jayarao Naragund had succeeded to get a loan of Rs. 2000 from the 'Southern Maratha Bank' of Dharwad. But company has closed in a short while. When Jayarao had to pay himself the bank loan of Rs. 2000.⁸

Gangadhar Rao Deshpande with both of his companions namely Bhadakamakar and Vamanrao Desai had decided to purchase the branch office of the "Indian Stores of Calcutta" which was opened at Bombay in 1904 by Mukharjee. They made it as "Deccan Stores". And its branch was opened at Belgaum as in the name of "Swadeshi Stores". Gangadhar Rao spent three to four days in a week on swadeshi lectures surrounding the Belgaum and Dharwad cities. But Telang accused him in his writings as "Gangadhar Rao's Lectures on Swadeshi were intended to mere grow the sales at his Bombay and Belgaum Swadeshi Store. But Gangadhar was not depressed by such blows. Despite, he kept his opponents in the Belgaum town panchayat into the 'Swadeshi Prachar Andolan', and they did help him in his public works. These opponent friends belonged to Lad community of Marathas, later they taken lead from the Maratha people successfully in the swadeshi activities in Belgaum.⁹

At Dharwad, Naragundkar Ramarao, Gangadhar Rao Ghatak and others started a 'Swadeshi

shop' in 1907, with a Rs. 3000/- as principal amount, but within four years it had run shut-down. All members lost their shares.¹⁰ Alur Venkatrao and his father taken the Rs.200 shares in the 'Sugar factory of Baroda', where Mr. Ghasawala started it by the patron help of Maharaja of Gaikwad. But Alur lost their shares worth of Rs. 200, due to bankruptcy of the sugar factory. Therefore in 1907, Alur Venkatrao joined with 6-7 his companions, started the 'Mangalore Slates Factory' at Khanapur (Belgaum District). Alur's brother Ramarao become one of its directors through putting Rs. 250. But, where they endured loss, and gave that factory to penashan Mamaledar Naiki. He has been run it up to 1974.

Then Venkatrao started weaving machine at Alur. Later taken back the share he started a "Jawali Shop (weaving and clothing)", at Dharwad. In 1908 Jayarao Naragund, Govindrao Chhabbi and others with the help of, Venkatrao started 'Krishi Karmottejak Mandal', a company at Bagalkot, with a intention to produce sugar by growing the sugarcane around Alur and Menasagi. At Dharwad, they started a shop namely 'Alpa-Dhana Samuchhay - Paraspara Sahayak - Mandala", but both had paupered.¹¹

Alur Venkatrao with a few of his fellowmen, on the day of yugadi started a "Match box factory" at Dharwad in 1908. And on the same day of 1909 they started 'Lead Pencil Factory', at the same place. The person behind the 'Match box factory' was Alagawadi Ramarao, he got a four months training in Bombay, regarding Match Stick and box production. Later in 1914 outbreak of first World War the worth of a pound phosphorus Rs. 5 become Rs. 100, and the rate of label printing of a match box grown its ten times. Therefore 'Match Box factory' was stopped. Then Alagawadi Ramarao started the work of 'Clay Model Pencils', but for package of the pencils to be packed in the 'card board boxes' which were to bring from abroad. Next, Ramarao started the 'Slate Factory'. But all the above efforts he got many obstacles, finally his efforts got setback.¹² But, Hanamantrao Kamalapur formerly clerk in the agriculture department gave up his job with the advice of Alur Venkatrao and started a 'pencil factory' at Dharwad in 1909. Due to stiff competition and lack of encouragement the 'Pencil Factory' was fallen.¹³

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