



RESEARCH ARTICLE

To revive India's industries: The global and imperial roots of swadeshi in the nineteenth century

Dinyar Patel 

S. P. Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai, India

Email: dinyar.patel@spjmr.org

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Abstract

This article explores the long roots of swadeshi (economic self-reliance) in nineteenth-century India, focusing on attempts at industrial revival through pedagogical institutions, exhibitions, and associations. These roots, which influenced the Swadeshi Movement and Gandhian swadeshi activity in the early twentieth century, demonstrate how it is impossible to understand swadeshi without taking an extensive global perspective. Indian thinkers engaged in contemporary global economic debates and with British imperial deliberations on free trade and protection; they fine-tuned comparative perspectives on the Indian economy through international travel and their readings of global history. In a similar spirit, Indians forged core swadeshi techniques through observing associational, institutional, and technological innovations across the British empire and the wider world. History was a powerful motivating force. Popular conceptions of deindustrialization under colonial rule fired Indians' imaginations about a past when the country was a global powerhouse for manufactured exports—and directly stimulated specific swadeshi endeavours. Situated at the confluence of profit-making and patriotism, swadeshi enterprise in the nineteenth century created some unexpected alliances: between Britons and Indians, colonial officials and nationalists, and urban intellectuals and small-town entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Swadeshi; deindustrialization; economic nationalism; global history; self-reliance

Introduction

By October 1906, the Swadeshi Movement had transformed Bengal into a humming laboratory for new political and economic ideas—an exemplar of self-reliance and mass consumer activism for the rest of India. Yet it was at precisely this moment that a nationalist leader from Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai, chose to make a surprising assertion: that Bengalis were actually newcomers to the idea of swadeshi. Lajpat Rai, who described himself as having been an 'out and out Swadeshist ... for the last twenty-five years' in Punjab, somewhat dismissively pronounced that, only a year beforehand,

Bengalis ‘did not know what *Swadesh Vastu* [swadeshi production] was’.¹ Three months later, at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, the veteran nationalist leader Dadabhai Naoroji, a native of Bombay, raised a similar point—that the events gripping Bengal were, after all, not so original and unique. “Swadeshi” is not a thing of to-day,’ he declared. ‘It has existed in Bombay as far as I know for many years past.’²

In terms of its scale and popular appeal, the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal undeniably constituted a new chapter in Indian political and economic history. But why were two prominent non-Bengali nationalist leaders so anxious to point out historical antecedents? And what might the observations of Lajpat Rai and Naoroji tell us about a longer history of swadeshi activity in India?

This article scans the nineteenth century for answers, investigating concerted attempts at industrial revival in India. By exploring imperial debates, plans for new institutions and industries, and the writings of Indian political and economic thinkers, we can unearth the very foundations of swadeshi in India—foundations that existed in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Punjab as well as in Bengal. While the term ‘swadeshi’ did not seem to enter popular usage until the 1870s, the ideas behind this emotive word—the promotion of indigenous industry, a gloomy sense of loss about India’s historic manufacturing prowess, the boycott of foreign goods, the remoulding of consumer habits, and the imperative of developing modern skills and technology—are clearly discernible decades beforehand. And yet, aside from C. A. Bayly’s deep dive into the historical meanings of homespun cloth, the longer history of swadeshi has received quite cursory scholarly treatment: for example, stray references to industrial ventures and associational activity in the late 1800s.³ The overwhelming majority of scholarship on swadeshi has focused on the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal and Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Congress’s adoption of swadeshi techniques from the Non-Cooperation Movement onwards.⁴

While previous scholarship has, at best, hinted at antecedents, I argue that a rich nineteenth-century genealogy of swadeshi can be uncovered by focusing on three distinct institutional methods for industrial revival: establishing industrial

¹Lala Lajpat Rai, *Lala Lajpat Rai writings and speeches*, (ed.) Vijaya Chandra Joshi (Delhi: University Publishers, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 105, 124.

²Dadabhai Naoroji, *Speeches and writings of Dadabhai Naoroji*, (ed.) G. A. Natesan (Madras: G. A. Natesan and Co., 1917; 2nd edn), p. 91.

³David Arnold, *Everyday technology: Machines and the making of India’s modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Chapter 4; C. A. Bayly, ‘The origins of swadeshi (home industry): Cloth and Indian society, 1700–1930’, in *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, (ed.) Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 285–321; Amit Bhattacharyya, *Swadeshi enterprise in Bengal, 1880–1920* (Kolkata: Readers Service, 2008); Bipan Chandra, *The rise and growth of economic nationalism in India: Economic policies of Indian national leadership, 1880–1905* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 2018), Chapters 2 and 3; Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From colonial economy to national space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Chapter 8. For a rare study of the longer arc of swadeshi activism in one particular region, see Shirin Mehta, ‘Social background of Swadeshi Movement in Gujarat, 1875–1908’, *Vidya (Humanities)*, vol. XXIV, no. 1, January 1981, pp. 31–46. Also see Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *The shaping of modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva, and beyond* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), pp. 125–130.

⁴For the classic account of the Swadeshi Movement, see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973). For work on Gandhi and swadeshi, see, especially, Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi’s nation: Homespun and modern India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

schools and institutes, which served as forerunners for technical education; organizing exhibitions, which highlighted Indian inventive talent; and launching associations or swadeshi sabhas, which funded new industries and shaped consumer habits. These methods brought together a diverse cast of characters in the nineteenth century. Indians and Europeans, maharajas and industrial magnates, inventors from the mofussil and city-dwelling journalists, and colonial officials and nationalists regularly worked shoulder-to-shoulder. Importantly, these three institutional methods persisted into the twentieth century, constituting core swadeshi tactics.⁵ Amid the thrum of activity in turn-of-the-century Bengal, observers like Lajpat Rai and Naoroji would have seen certain parallels with earlier events in their home provinces. They would have visualized an arc of swadeshi enterprise united through long-established ideas for industrial revival.

My genealogy of swadeshi is not simply an exercise in intellectual history. An institutional lens provides us with both an intellectual *and* social history of swadeshi, telling us not just what people thought, but how they acted upon their ideas. Scholars have often treated these domains separately, but the archival record from the nineteenth century clearly indicates that economic thinkers did not sequester themselves in ivory towers. They played definitive roles in entrepreneurial and institution-building activities.

Any discussion of industrial ‘revival’ naturally invites consideration of scholarly debates over the extent of deindustrialization in India.⁶ I acknowledge that recent scholarship has pushed against notions of a collapse of mass manufacturing under British rule, demonstrating that, even in the cotton textiles sector, the situation was far more complex than has been conveyed in nationalist historical accounts.⁷ In this article, however, I focus on popular understandings of the phenomenon in the 1800s: what I term ‘narratives of deindustrialization’. The *idea* of deindustrialization was omnipresent, hotly debated and discussed in both India and Great Britain. Any student of nineteenth-century India can testify to the extent of the written output on the subject. It even became the stuff of song and poetry.⁸ A widespread belief about India’s manufacturing decline triggered a search for explanations—such as specific colonial policies or inferior Indian technology—and fundamentally shaped responses. As in nineteenth-century Ireland, the true extent of deindustrialization might remain a topic of contention, and modern historians can certainly critique how political and

⁵Examples include the Bengal Technical Institute in Calcutta, swadeshi-themed exhibitions alongside annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and the proliferation of swadeshi sabhas throughout the 1930s.

⁶For a recent critical analysis of the literature on deindustrialization in India, see Indrajit Ray, ‘The myth and reality of deindustrialization in early modern India’, in *A new economic history of colonial India*, (eds) Latika Chaudhary et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 52–66.

⁷For recent revisionist work on deindustrialization in India, see, especially, Indrajit Ray, *Bengal industries and the British Industrial Revolution (1757–1857)* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Tirthankar Roy, ‘De-industrialization’, in *Land, labour and rights: Daniel Thorner Memorial Lectures*, (ed.) Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), pp. 232–249; and Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional industry in the economy of colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁸Dadabhai Naoroji, *Essays, speeches, addresses and writings (on Indian politics) of the Hon’ble Dadabhai Naoroji*, (ed.) Chunilal Lallubhai Parekh (Bombay: Caxton Printing Works, 1887), pp. 468–469; Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of my life and times* (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1932), p. 256.

economic thinkers in the 1800s obsessed over particular industries like handloom weaving while not acknowledging manufacturing growth elsewhere.⁹ However, we must recognize that ideas and emotions—no matter how they converged or diverged from economic realities—created a distinct institutional and economic landscape with lasting legacies in the twentieth century. A longer history of swadeshi captures how such emotions were first translated into projects for economic self-reliance.

Aside from probing this longer history, I argue that it is impossible to understand swadeshi without placing it in an imperial and global context, exposing vibrant transnational links. In a somewhat paradoxical manner, swadeshi—an idea with a strong anti-foreign core, nativist and xenophobic at its worst extremes during the twentieth century—was fundamentally shaped by global ideas and events.¹⁰ Political and economic policy emanating from Westminster, imperial debates over free trade and protectionism, and imperial and global wars all left their mark on nineteenth-century swadeshi activism. Indians, furthermore, constantly looked abroad for inspiration and ideas—to institutional models in Britain, continental Europe, and the United States, as well as to places like Egypt and Japan as examples of non-Western societies attempting modern industrialization. Landmark international events, such as the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, stirred Indians to think of new ways to popularize and promote indigenous goods. India's pre-eminent economic thinkers, meanwhile, scoured the works of Western economists and drew comparisons with other colonized societies, like the Dutch East Indies, to demonstrate links between colonial rule and deindustrialization in India and even to make the case for state support for industry.¹¹ As an added twist, we discover that, until the Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857, some of the most vociferous champions of Indian industry—and the most trenchant critics of India's economic fate under colonial rule—were Britons. In both the United Kingdom and the subcontinent, these Britons linked India's economic plight with other imperial and global debates: over free trade, protectionism, slavery, and the very nature of industrial capitalism.

In a related vein, swadeshi was inextricably bound up with ideas of history, both global and subcontinental. India's history as an international hub of manufacturing, especially for textiles, was a veritable call to arms: a powerful motivation for swadeshi enterprise and the source of intensive soul-searching about India's future role in the global economy. Nearly every attempt at industrial revival in the nineteenth century made some sort of reference to a more prosperous past—a vanished history of Indian economic, trade, and technological leadership. There are, once more, some intriguing parallels with Ireland, where popular ideas of the history of English colonization and

⁹Tirthankar Roy, *The economic history of India, 1857–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000; 1st edn), Chapter 4. For an example of revisionist work on Irish deindustrialization, see David S. Johnson and Liam Kennedy, 'Nationalist historiography and the decline of the Irish economy: George O'Brien revisited', in *Ireland's histories: Aspects of state, society and ideology*, (eds) Seán Hutton and Paul Stewart (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 11–35.

¹⁰Mircea Raianu makes a similar point about the 'fundamental contradiction' at the heart of swadeshi: that it was impossible to create a self-sufficient national economy without imperial and global financial and economic links. Mircea Raianu, *Tata: The global corporation that built Indian capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), p. 46.

¹¹See, for example, Mahadev Govind Ranade, 'Netherlands India and the culture system', in *Essays on Indian economics: A collection of essays and speeches* (Madras: G. A. Natesan and Co., 1906), pp. 70–104.

the Union shaped both hostility towards industrialization and ambitions for industrial regeneration.¹² At the same time, Indians gleaned lessons in economic self-reliance from the histories of other countries. Many probed the economic history of their colonial masters; a few individuals looked as far away as colonial America and Napoleonic France. History, like observing contemporary global developments, became a powerful tool for comparison, a yardstick by which to measure relative economic progress and decline. It should be of little surprise that both Lajpat Rai and Naoroji drew upon history to contextualize the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal.

What follows is a history of both traditional manufacturing and modern industry; indigenous methods and Western technology; the production of textile items as well as candles, Diwali firecrackers, and guns; and joint enterprises between Britons and Indians as well as Indian-led projects that had a whiff of anti-British hostility. As Prasannan Parthasarathi notes, most histories of Indian industrialization begin after 1850, neglecting early nineteenth-century antecedents.¹³ By specifically examining projects meant to revive Indian manufacturing, it is possible to reconstruct a century-long trajectory of a certain type of industrialization, one buoyed by schools, publications, and societies in addition to machines, labour, and capital.

Developing narratives of deindustrialization

We can trace many of the core ideas of swadeshi to the long tradition, both in Great Britain and the subcontinent, of criticizing the economic consequences of the East India Company's rule in India. As early as the 1770s and 1780s, Indian thinkers identified the drain of wealth and steady impoverishment of the general population, while Britons such as Adam Smith and Edmund Burke focused on questions of agricultural produce and land revenue.¹⁴ By the early 1800s, however, there were growing anxieties about the state of India's manufacturing economy, especially after the Charter Act of 1813 helped open the floodgates to the fruits of the Industrial Revolution imported from Britain. During the nineteenth century, the collapse of Indian manufactures—alongside the incidence of mass famine—became a totemic sign of economic mismanagement and impoverishment under British rule. The idea that India was being steadily deindustrialized triggered particularly passionate critiques about the nature of British capitalism and the powerlessness of Indians to influence economic policies in their own country. It also begged the question: how could India's industries be revived?

By the time of the Charter Act of 1833, which renewed the Company's mandate but stripped it of its remaining commercial functions, two distinct narratives had emerged for explaining Indian deindustrialization. One narrative held that the collapse of Indian manufacturing was the result of its sheer primitiveness—that it was a natural victim of the technological advances made in the Industrial Revolution in the West. This perspective was evident in European accounts of Indian science and

¹²Mary E. Daly, 'The economic ideals of Irish nationalism: Frugal comfort or lavish austerity?', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1994, pp. 86–88.

¹³Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe grew rich and Asia did not: Global economic divergence, 1600–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 226.

¹⁴Kumkum Chatterjee, 'History as self-representation: The recasting of a political tradition in late eighteenth-century eastern India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1998, pp. 940, 942.

technology which, after the 1780s, increasingly emphasized their rudimentary and backward qualities.¹⁵ James Mill's *History of British India* excoriated the 'rudeness of the tools and machinery used by the people of Hindustan', the result of a 'great want of ingenuity'. Even the cotton textile industry had been sustained by 'coarse and ill-fashioned' implements.¹⁶ As David Arnold notes, ideas of India's technological backwardness—and Indians' perceived inability to innovate—powered the colonial discourse of 'improvement' through the nineteenth century (and inspired a few tepid attempts by the Company to introduce innovations from Britain, such as in Bengal's silk industry).¹⁷

The second narrative focused on policy: how Indian industries were being destroyed in the name of 'free trade', a fig leaf for preferential treatment for British manufacturers. In 1832, debate over the Charter Act roused a group of Indians in Calcutta to petition parliament, complaining that 'every encouragement' was held out for 'the growth and produce of foreign as well as of English industry', resulting in the mass pauperization of Indian textile manufacturers.¹⁸ However, many of the loudest champions of Indian industry—firm believers that imperial policies were deliberately ruining Indian manufacturing—were Britons or Anglo-Indians. In 1828, even Lord Ellenborough, then president of the Board of Control and later the governor-general of India, endorsed a policy of import substitution for India, expressing grave concerns about a widening trade deficit.¹⁹ Britons and Anglo-Indians helped make Indian policy part of broader critiques of British capitalism, free trade, and the workings of the imperial economy. For example, the *Asiatic Journal*, a London publication, linked the dumping of British textile goods in India with misgivings about industrial capitalism in the metropole. 'We have extinguished the beautiful manufactures of Dacca', the paper charged, 'by pouring into India ship-loads, not indeed of slaves, but of the fruits worse than slavery in our factories' (the allusion to slavery is noteworthy, given that debate over the Charter Act overlapped with consideration of the Abolition Act).²⁰

Other commentators charged that free trade policies unleashed a particularly ruthless form of capitalism in India which was reducing 'formerly a great manufacturing country' into a mere producer of raw materials, resulting in 'an industrious people ground to the earth'.²¹ The *Bombay Gazette*, one of western India's leading English-language papers, blamed free trade policies for drying up Indian capital. 'The free trade, if it has not drained the country of its capital, has choked up the springs from which it flowed,' it argued. For the *Gazette*, the Charter Act was a moment to reflect on India's utterly transformed role in the world economy—and, specifically, how Company rule wrought this transformation. Two millennia of India being an

¹⁵Dharampal, *Indian science and technology in the eighteenth century: Some contemporary European accounts* (Mapusa: Other India Press, 2001), p. 3; David Arnold, *Science, technology, and medicine in colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 97.

¹⁶James Mill, *The history of British India* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), vol. 1, pp. 353, 344.

¹⁷Arnold, *Everyday technology*, pp. 22–24; Arnold, *Science, technology, and medicine*, pp. 95–96.

¹⁸*Report from the Select Committee on East India Produce* (London: House of Commons, 1840), p. 275.

¹⁹Blair B. Kling, *Partner in empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the age of enterprise in eastern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 70; C. H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784–1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940), pp. 262–263.

²⁰'The East-India question', *Asiatic Journal*, vol. 11, no. 41, May 1833, p. 11.

²¹Verax, 'Unjust neglect of Indian manufactures', *Bombay Gazette*, 9 August 1834, p. 384.

exporting global power had come to an inglorious end; instead, India was now wasting away and beholden to a glut of imports, including raw materials from the United States and the West Indies, and manufactured goods from Europe.²²

What was to be done? Among those who blamed Indian deindustrialization upon unfair trade policies, the equalization of duties on British and Indian manufactured goods became a rallying cry.²³ In making this case before the House of Commons, Robert Montgomery Martin, a prolific writer on imperial affairs, affirmed that throttling Indian industry and reducing the country to a mere producer of raw goods would 'lower her in the scale of civilization'.²⁴ There are some striking parallels with debates over deindustrialization in Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s. Martin, a native of Dublin, would have been aware of how Irish nationalists increasingly associated the 1801 Act of Union with the decline of Irish industries and mass peasantization.²⁵ One leader of the Young Ireland Movement, Thomas Davis, even advocated 'home manufactures'—cottage industries which would have been familiar to the contemporary Indian manufacturer—as a means of economic revival.²⁶ Debate over Indian import and export duties, therefore, took place while other subjects in the British empire assailed free trade and the lack of regional autonomy over economic policies—and often promoted similar remedial efforts.

On the other side of the debate, those who found Indian industry irredeemably primitive made a controversial suggestion. They advocated a measure of European colonial settlement in India. While in London, Rammohun Roy justified colonial settlement by alluding to the development of Indian manufacturing: European settlers could bring 'improvements in the mechanical arts ... by which the natives would of course benefit'.²⁷ Even Frederick John Shore, a Bengal Civil Service officer who was sympathetic to the plight of Indian manufacturers, believed that an influx of Europeans would bring about positive change. Shore argued that European skills and capital could help revive industries such as papermaking, iron manufacturing, pottery, glassworks, carpetmaking, and the refining of sugar and saltpetre; he nevertheless cautioned would-be immigrants from assuming an air of superiority about Western manufactured products, arguing that 'the rough, dirty-looking production of the native workman' could be more cost-effective and durable.²⁸ Others, like Mountstuart Elphinstone, the former governor of Bombay, were more lukewarm about the idea of European settlement. Elphinstone instead proposed licensing a select number of British capitalists and manufacturers to settle in India and thereby infuse the country

²² *Bombay Gazette*, 9 February 1833, p. 61.

²³ See, for example, the petition of 117 'natives of high respectability' in Calcutta to the Privy Council for Trade in 1831. *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company* (House of Commons, 1832), vol. II, pp. 573–574.

²⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on East India Produce*, p. 278.

²⁵ Daly, 'The economic ideals of Irish nationalism', pp. 87–88; Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Industry and communications, 1801–45', in *A new history of Ireland*, (ed.) W. E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), vol. v, p. 144.

²⁶ Thomas Davis, *Prose writings of Thomas Davis*, (ed.) T. W. Rolleston (London: Walter Scott, 1890), p. 63.

²⁷ *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company* (House of Commons, 1832), vol. I, p. 341.

²⁸ Frederick John Shore, 'On the Prospects of English Settlers', in *Notes on Indian Affairs* (London: John W. Parker, 1837), vol. 2, pp. 32–36, 55.

with new capital and industry.²⁹ For its advocates, colonial settlement had a distinct pedagogical role, allowing for the transmission of technologies and skills that would bring modern industry to the subcontinent.

The Charter Act of 1833 thus triggered discussion about deindustrialization among a wide variety of individuals: the Bengali elite of Calcutta, journalists and reformers in Britain, and colonial mandarins. In light of the future tenor of swadeshi activity, however, the most momentous suggestions were made by an anonymous individual. 'Verax', claiming to be a European residing in the mofussil, wrote to the *Bombay Gazette* in August 1834, pronouncing the Charter Act as 'a mere claptrap' for not equalizing duties on British and Indian manufactured goods. Acknowledging the limited utility of the petition sent to parliament from Calcutta in 1832—news of which, importantly, was still in circulation across the subcontinent—he instead suggested a 'patriotic movement on the part of the higher classes of the Native community, to endeavour to promote the consumption of native manufactures'. Verax urged Indians to form associations that would encourage individuals to wear Indian-produced cloth and ensure that 'the consumption of English Goods' was 'discouraged as much as possible'.³⁰

His letter, in the yellowing pages of an 1830s Bombay broadsheet, has tantalizing implications. Could an anonymous Englishman have been the first to publicly suggest something like a swadeshi sabha for boycotting foreign goods? It is impossible to know for sure—Verax was probably taking part in broader conversations about such ideas among Indians and fellow Europeans. As a Briton, he was most likely aware of boycott campaigns in the metropole, such as those recently employed against slave-grown sugar from the West Indies (which triggered British abolitionist demands for Indian sugar).³¹ He contributed to a wider debate over Indian manufacturing in one other important way: by suggesting that the colonial government actively support Indian industry. 'It is now more than ever the duty of our Indian Government to foster and encourage efforts of this kind, by supplying the public wants, as often as possible, from native articles,' he declared.³² Verax's letter demonstrates that, for India, the boycott of foreign goods and government support for indigenous manufactures were not ideas that originated in the late nineteenth century. They were being considered and debated even before the dawn of the Victorian era.

Britons and Indians thus worked together, often in unexpected ways, to further develop narratives of deindustrialization and plans to stimulate new industry. One of the most creative and noteworthy examples began in 1841, after a remarkably liberal and open-minded Anglo-Indian (whose identity remains something of a mystery) took over the editorship of the *Bombay Gazette* and published a number of searing critiques of British rule penned by Indian writers.³³ These critiques focused on the destruction

²⁹Mountstuart Elphinstone to Thomas Hyde Villiers, in *Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East-India Company, 16th August 1832, and Minutes of Evidence* (J. L. Cox and Son, 1833), p. 46.

³⁰Verax, 'Unjust neglect of Indian manufactures', p. 384.

³¹See, for example, Ulbe Bosma, *The sugar plantation in India and Indonesia: Industrial production, 1770–2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 57–62.

³²Verax, 'Unjust neglect of Indian manufactures', p. 384.

³³Murali Ranganathan has identified the editor as Barty Wynyard, who had been dishonourably discharged from the military in April 1841. Murali Ranganathan, 'Introduction', in *The collected works of J. V.*

of the indigenous textile industry and excoriated India's dependence on manufactured imports.

We know the identity of only one of these authors, Bhaskar Pandurang (Tarkhadkar), an employee of the Bombay opium and cotton magnate Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. Other writers provided hints of their identities and backgrounds. 'Philanthropy', for example, wrote from Bombay and remarked that he had travelled extensively through the Konkan and the Deccan, where he had 'indeed shuddered at witnessing that almost the whole of the inhabitants have been reduced to the last ebb of penury', especially 'families of the most celebrated weavers'.³⁴ In general, these Indian contributors to the *Bombay Gazette* remarked on the rapacity of British capitalism, fuelled by a desire to drain the wealth of India and eliminate any potential indigenous competition.

It was left to Bhaskar to provide the most damning indictments—indictments that were grounded in prodigious historical references. In a series of eight letters signed by 'A Hindoo', Bhaskar accused the East India Company of outright plunder and pronounced British rule as 'the most bitter curse India has ever been visited with'.³⁵ Aside from titillating the reading public of Bombay, Bhaskar's articles also demonstrated how broader global developments—in this case, imperial warfare—were shaping Indian economic thought. He alluded to the fiscal imprudence of the ongoing First Afghan War, which amounted to the 'throwing away' of 'so enormous a mass of the Indian wealth in the dust'.³⁶ But it was the Opium War in China that pushed Bhaskar to highlight the utter moral depravity of British capitalism and free trade doctrines: how they were motivated by greed, contempt of others' laws and norms, and indifference to the fate of non-European lives. Focusing on China helped Bhaskar to make the case that these aspects of British capitalism were not particular to India—they were universal. China, 'the most ancient, richest, and the proudest monarchy in the world', now seemed 'to share the same fate as the once mighty, but now unhappy Hindoostan'.³⁷

J. V. Naik has noted how Bhaskar and his fellow writers fashioned antecedents to the drain theory—and how they were particularly influential upon Dadabhai Naoroji, who attended some of their gatherings while a student at Bombay's Elphinstone College in the early 1840s.³⁸ But their significance was far greater. The writers combined a thoroughgoing condemnation of India's industrial collapse with a patriotic call to action through public organization. And they did this while further developing the two principal narratives of Indian deindustrialization. For example, Philanthropy turned the proposal for industrial tutelage via European colonization on its head: instead, he argued, Indians could travel to Europe to learn the skills and techniques of modern industry. He believed that wealthy Bombay merchants could act as financial patrons for Indians studying and training abroad.³⁹ Another contributor, 'A Parsee', placed his

Naik: *Reform and renaissance in nineteenth century Maharashtra*, (ed.) Murali Ranganathan (Mumbai: Asiatic Society of Mumbai, 2016), p. 16.

³⁴'Philanthropy', *Bombay Gazette*, 7 July 1841, p. 22.

³⁵A Hindoo, 'Letter No. IV', *Bombay Gazette*, 20 August 1841, p. 174.

³⁶A Hindoo, 'Letters of a Hindoo. No. VII', *Bombay Gazette*, 9 October 1841, p. 334.

³⁷A Hindoo, 'Letters of a Hindoo. No. V', *Bombay Gazette*, 16 September 1841, p. 262.

³⁸'Forerunners of Dadabhai Naoroji's drain theory', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 36, no. 46/47, 24 November 2001, pp. 4428–4432.

³⁹'Philanthropy', *Bombay Gazette*, p. 23.

faith in reform movements in Great Britain: they could be the models for mass meetings and petitioning by which Indians could seek redress for unfair trade policies.⁴⁰ Bhaskar hoped for the establishment of modern textile mills in India.⁴¹

A few years later, in 1849, another Maharashtrian intellectual, Gopal Hari Deshmukh—one of the pioneers of Marathi journalism, a man better known by his pen name of Lokahitavadi—weighed in, placing the onus of responsibility on the Indian consumer. Writing in the Marathi broadsheet *Prabhākar* (by this time, the *Gazette* had folded, shortly after its liberal Anglo-Indian editor was dismissed), Lokahitavadi denounced the flood of imports from Britain and urged his fellow Indians to boycott them. Indians, he averred, should only consume ‘what is produced in our own country’.⁴² They should do so even if the goods were of low quality. Lokahitavadi, however, was confident that, in time, Indians would educate themselves and ‘acquire skills to produce excellent goods’.⁴³ Through Lokahitavadi, we see, perhaps for the first time, pedagogy and consumer activism yoked together for the cause of industrial revival.

In 1901, near the end of his political career, Naoroji reflected on the significance of these Maharashtrian intellectuals from half a century ago. Writing to Lord George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India, he recalled how Bhaskar and his associates had formed ‘a secret society’ to discuss India’s economic predicament and ‘what should be done’. As early as the 1840s, therefore, Indians were already creating organizations (including clandestine ones) focused on questions of deindustrialization and impoverishment. This group was ‘as rebellious as it could possibly be’—and, notably, it was ‘headed by an Englishman’. Naoroji acknowledged that the presence of an Englishman, perhaps a professor at Elphinstone or the progressive editor of the *Bombay Gazette*, was ‘nothing strange’.⁴⁴ He was one of a long line of Britons condemnatory of colonial affairs in India—and yet another example of how criticism of British economic policy was, at this stage, a joint effort that bridged racial divides.

New institutions: Industrialization as a pedagogical endeavour

By the time that Philanthropy wrote to the *Bombay Gazette* proposing that Indians should venture to Europe to learn about modern industry, several of his co-nationals were already setting their sights on travelling abroad. It was in this era that Indian visitors to Britain began surveying in detail the country’s great industrial complexes, taking note of what could be attempted in India. In 1842, Dwarkanath Tagore, a Bengali businessman who might have had a hand in the Calcutta petition to parliament from a decade earlier, toured British docks, a factory for steam engines, a brewery, and the *Times of London*’s printing press.⁴⁵ Others travelled to Britain for formal training,

⁴⁰A Parsee, ‘Letter I’, *Bombay Gazette*, 12 August 1841, p. 145.

⁴¹A Hindoo, ‘Letter No. IV’, *Bombay Gazette*, p. 174.

⁴²‘Aṅḷe deśant pikeḷ tevḍhac maḷ dhyāvā’. Anant Kakba Priolkar, *Lokahitavādikrut Nibandhasaṅgrah* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), p. 143.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴⁴Dadabhai Naoroji to Lord George Hamilton, 26 February 1901, National Archives of India, Dadabhai Naoroji Papers, E-72 (98).

⁴⁵Earlier in his life, Tagore had been apprenticed to Robert Cutlar Fergusson, who ultimately presented the petition to parliament. Kling, *Partner in empire*, pp. 30, 171–172.

constituting the first generation of Indians seeking technical and industrial education abroad. Two brothers from the famous Wadia family of shipbuilders, Jehangeer and Hirjeebhoy, left Bombay in 1838 to study engineering in London. Here, they supplemented their education with visits to the Adelaide Gallery on the Strand and the Polytechnic Institute on Regent Street, two institutions that popularized commercial and industrial applications of science and technology. The brothers thought deeply about the adaptation of certain machinery to Indian conditions, wishing that something like these London institutes could be created in Bombay for the benefit of Indian business and industry.⁴⁶

But Britain was not the only industrial model for Indians. Some took a marked interest in the economic progress of Egypt under Muhammad Ali Pasha (Britons, for their part, worried about the potential for Egyptian textile goods to outcompete British imports in India).⁴⁷ Since the sea voyage to Great Britain before the Suez Canal's construction required stops in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt became a relatively convenient place for Indians to observe economic and industrial change. One such individual was Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia, Jehangeer and Hirjeebhoy's cousin, who also studied engineering in London. During a stay in Cairo in 1839, Wadia visited a cotton textile mill, a printing press, and copperworks; he penned a detailed account of the workings of an iron foundry.⁴⁸ Egypt was still exciting interest in 1855, when Dadabhai Naoroji visited the country and praised Muhammad Ali's successors for introducing railway lines and a telegraph network. Naoroji, however, delivered a mixed verdict on the efficacy of the pasha's policy of sending Egyptians for training to the United Kingdom and France.⁴⁹

Increasingly, therefore, Indians travelled overseas to learn about modern industry, both through formal training and detailed observation. Apart from the growth in volume of such travel, we can witness in the 1840s a critical development in the subcontinent: the importation and adaptation of certain institutional models from abroad that were specifically geared towards reviving Indian industries. A direct response to one narrative of deindustrialization—the rudimentary nature of traditional Indian manufacturing—these new models were meant to impart modern European technological methods, either grafting them upon indigenous ones or supplanting them entirely.

The success of mechanics' institutes in Great Britain and the United States piqued the interest of many in the subcontinent (Jehangeer and Hirjeebhoy Wadia had visited these institutes while in London).⁵⁰ A group of Indians and Britons in Calcutta established a mechanics' institute in 1839 and, by 1847, Bombay boasted one as well.⁵¹

⁴⁶Jehangeer Nowrojee Wadia and Hirjeebhoy Merwanjee Wadia, *Journal of a Residence of Two Years and a Half in Great Britain* (London: William H. Allen and Co., 1841), pp. 138, 139.

⁴⁷Sven Beckert, *Empire of cotton: A global history* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), p. 168.

⁴⁸Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia, *Diary of an Overland Journey from Bombay to England, and of a Year's Residence in Great Britain* (London: Henington and Galabin, 1840), pp. 18–21.

⁴⁹'Edanthī Mālhā sudhīnī śafar', *Rāst Goftār*, 7 October 1855, p. 317.

⁵⁰Wadia and Wadia, *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 141–142. For more on mechanics' institutes in Britain, see, for example, Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The rise and fall of the Victorian city* (London: Phoenix, 2005), pp. 166–171.

⁵¹'Bengal', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 6 February 1839, p. 82; *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 18 August 1855, p. 441.

Madras citizens, meanwhile, formed a polytechnic institute in 1846: Europeans overwhelmingly dominated its leadership but the nawab of the Carnatic stepped in to provide a portion of its finances. The polytechnic institute harboured ambitions to make ‘improvements in the arts and manufactures’ through a school for Indian artisans.⁵² Elsewhere in the southern presidency town, Alexander Hunter, a doctor in the Madras Army, began an industrial school in 1850 whose success attracted comment from as far away as Calcutta, where a local newspaper declared that the proliferation of similar institutions across India would substantially cut down on the need for imports.⁵³ The Madras institution, furthermore, spurred Europeans and Indians in Calcutta—including Bengali political and intellectual heavyweights such as Rajendralal Mitra and Peary Chand Mitra—to establish a Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art in 1854. By August of that year, this society had matured into a school of industrial art, with a focus on pottery and brickmaking.⁵⁴

This flurry of institution-building illustrates something important: that, across the subcontinent, Indians and Britons were eagerly thinking about how Western science and technology could be yoked to industrial progress. They were aware of, and alert to, institutional projects taking place in different parts of the country. But while these new institutes were geared towards producing an industrial future for India, some commentators also looked to the past, suggesting that they would serve an important historical purpose. Such institutes could ‘spread manufactures once more over the country’ and ‘bring back the condition of our tradesmen to what it was when the western world took lessons from their hands’.⁵⁵ The idea of India’s former manufacturing prowess animated pedagogical endeavours, as well.

The likely author of those observations was George Buist, a Scotsman who arrived in India to take over the helm of the *Bombay Times* in 1840. Until 1857, when he dramatically fell from grace due to his venomous remarks about Indians during the Mutiny-Rebellion, Buist was western India’s chief innovator for imported institutional models.⁵⁶ His career in Bombay provides a fascinating glimpse into the dynamics of these new institutions and how, precisely, they attempted a revival of manufacturing in India. Under Buist, the *Times* itself often took on the form of a Western scientific or business journal, becoming an almost messianic mouthpiece for the spread of Indian industry. The energetic Scotsman became deeply involved in Bombay’s industrial development, supposedly introducing the art of glazing in Indian pottery, instructing Indians in printing technology, and petitioning the East India Company for the importation of machinery for improving brickmaking and tileworks.⁵⁷ In 1854, he

⁵²‘Madras’, *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 20 October 1847, p. 834; *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 14 October 1848, p. 777.

⁵³‘Madras industrial institution’, *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 5 February 1853, p. 247.

⁵⁴‘The School of Industrial Art’, *Friend of India*, 24 August 1854, pp. 531–532; Jogesh Chandra Bagal, ‘History of the Govt. College of Art and Craft’, in *Centenary: Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta, 1864–1964* (Calcutta: Statesman Press, 1964), p. 2. The institute, which developed a stronger focus on the arts, survives today as the Government College of Art and Craft.

⁵⁵‘Jubbulpore manufactures’, *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 26 August 1848, p. 645.

⁵⁶For an overview of Buist’s career in Bombay, see Aroon Tikekar, ‘Dr George Buist of the *Bombay Times*: A study of the self-proclaimed messianism of an Anglo-Indian editor, 1840–57’, *South Asian Studies*, no. 34, 1999, pp. 98–113.

⁵⁷*Memoir, with Testimonials, &c. of George Buist, LL.D.* (Cupar: Geo. S. Tullis, 1846), pp. 83, 84, 91.

joined several of Bombay's mercantile and intellectual elites—including the Parsi *shetia* (merchant and community leader) Kharshedji Nasarvanji Cama and the Maharashtrian polymath Bhau Daji—in founding a paper manufacturing company.⁵⁸

Above all, Buist saw himself as a teacher, someone who could introduce Indians to and instruct them on superior European technological methods. Power and initiative in new institutions, as Buist's career demonstrates, remained firmly in the hands of Europeans. During the 1840s, he filled the columns of the *Times* with plans for a polytechnical institute in Bombay which would include an economic museum, a programme of lectures and instruction, and a working factory. Buist's institute seemed largely modelled after its namesake in London as well as the Adelaide Gallery, although there is the likelihood that he sought inspiration further afield: during his editorship, the *Times* published laudatory articles on institutes such as the École Polytechnique of Paris and Muhammad Ali Pasha's polytechnical school in Cairo.⁵⁹ Closer to home, he took particular interest in an industrial school established in Jabalpur by William Sleeman as a reformatory for criminals (including so-called criminal tribes).⁶⁰

Under the umbrella of the polytechnical institute, Buist laid the groundwork for an industrial school in Bombay, which he now explicitly modelled on ragged schools in Britain.⁶¹ Like the ragged schools and the Jabalpur school, Buist's institute had a reformatory purpose, imparting mechanical and industrial skills to at-risk juveniles. But the Scotsman flung the doors of his school wide open. In addition to its juvenile cohort, Buist vowed to take in any Indian candidate interested in modern technical training. 'Our ulterior object,' he declared in the *Times*, 'is ... to bring into existence a community of missionary artizans who may diffuse over the land the handicrafts of Europe.'⁶² Buist mixed a zeal for promoting Indian industry with a firm belief that this could only be accomplished through decisively non-Indian methods and machinery.

Despite Buist's oftentimes condescending views towards indigenous skills and technology, his industrial school elicited an enthusiastic response from the Indian civic elite. Bombay notables such as Jagannath Shankarsheth, Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Mangaldas Nathubhai, Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, and Bhau Daji helped administer the institution and served as benefactors—although Buist and his fellow Europeans held the real reins of control.⁶³ Significantly, the school excited interest among Indians far removed from the western metropolis, such as the maharaja of Jaipur, who dispatched five pupils from his state.⁶⁴ By 1852, three years after its establishment, Buist's school had 50 students who, under the Scotsman's watchful supervision, were weaned

⁵⁸'The Bombay Paper Manufacturing Company', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 16 September 1854, p. 4260.

⁵⁹'The museum', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 14 February 1849, p. 104; 'Scientific: Polytechnic School of Paris', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 6 June 1840, p. 366; 'Egypt', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 9 June 1847, p. 461.

⁶⁰'Jubbulpore manufactures', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, p. 645. For more on the Jabalpur school, see 'Report on the Jubbulpore School of Industry', in *Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department)*, No. XV (Calcutta: Calcutta Gazette Office, 1856), pp. 1–34.

⁶¹'Schools of industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 14 February 1849, p. 103.

⁶²'Schools of industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 28 March 1849, p. 208.

⁶³'The School of Industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 28 February 1852, p. 144; 'The School of Industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 1 March 1856, p. 139.

⁶⁴*Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 27 January 1847, p. 67.

from indigenous implements and tutored in modern British devices such as the flying shuttle and circular saw.⁶⁵

But the school was not an entirely Eurocentric endeavour: Buist seems to have also introduced certain technological innovations from outside of the West, such as Egypt. During a brief stay in Egypt in the summer of 1845, he became fascinated by the windmills used in Cairo and Alexandria for grinding grain, commissioning detailed drawings of the apparatuses and vowing to introduce them into India. The industrial school soon became a hub of innovation for wind-powered machinery: the *Bombay Times* even speculated that windmills could be employed for ginning cotton.⁶⁶ Buist's students from Jaipur were specifically trained in adaptations of the Egyptian wind-driven grain mills, raising the intriguing possibility that, through the exertions of a Scotsman, North African machinery might have been introduced into the remote vastness of Rajasthan.⁶⁷

Buist's grand plans for a polytechnical institution in Bombay never materialized, although his championship of an economic museum yielded results in 1855; the industrial school, meanwhile, was taken over by the Baghdadi Jewish magnate David Sassoon in 1857, Buist's *annus horribilis*.⁶⁸ Likewise, many of the institutions founded in the 1840s and 1850s—driven mostly by civic initiative rather than government impetus—enjoyed a short burst of productive energy before becoming moribund. However, the legacies of these institutions lingered far longer. Along with the new engineering schools in places such as Roorkee and Poona, they helped foster Indian interest in—and demands for—technical and industrial education over the next several decades.

Indians quickly recognized how technical education could be the handmaiden of industrialization. From the 1850s onwards, they included lectures on industrial technology in their learned societies. The Students' Literary and Scientific Society in Bombay, for example, featured talks in Marathi and Gujarati on 'popular science': Dadabhai Naoroji delivered a series of lectures on the mechanics of steam engines, while others expounded on the functioning of air pumps and the electric telegraph.⁶⁹ Newspapers, journals, and books supplemented the work of learned societies. In the early 1870s, the Gujarati writer Narayan Hemchandra published accounts of technological and manufacturing experiments in a Bombay magazine and stressed the importance of 'industrial education' (*udyogni kelavni*).⁷⁰ P. R. Cola, a Bombay native residing in London, drew upon extensive surveys of British mills, factories, and foundries to publish a do-it-yourself manual for Indian industrialists, *How to Develop [sic] Productive Industry in India and the East*, in 1869. Cola recalled India's former manufacturing prowess, condemned the 'rude apparatus' still utilized in the subcontinent, and pressed for the steady mastery and adoption of Western technology.⁷¹

⁶⁵'The School of Industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 28 February 1852, p. 144; 'The School of Industry', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 1 March 1856, p. 139.

⁶⁶'Wind-mills adapted for India', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 4 December 1847, p. 957.

⁶⁷*Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 27 January 1847, p. 67.

⁶⁸The school continues to function in modern Mumbai as the David Sassoon Industrial School. 'David Sassoon Institution', *Bombay Times and Standard*, 3 April 1861, p. 3.

⁶⁹'Report', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 4 April 1855, p. 212; *Proceedings of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society, Bombay, for the Years 1854-55 and 1855-56* (Bombay: Bombay Gazette Press, 1856), p. 6.

⁷⁰Narayan Hemchandra, *Hum Pote* (Ahmedabad: Vijay Pravartak Press, 1900), pp. 42, 43.

⁷¹*How to Develop Productive Industry in India and the East* (London: Virtue and Co., 1867), p. 7.

A similar spirit animated a few of the scientific societies cropping up elsewhere across the subcontinent. In Aligarh in 1864, the Muslim reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan urged the adoption of technology which would specifically improve industrial and agricultural productivity.⁷² Meanwhile in Bengal, the Bethune Society featured a talk on 'The Union of Science, Industry and Art' in 1854, but most learned societies doggedly focused on pure science. In the early 1850s, however, the prolific writer Grish Chunder Ghose made one of the earliest public appeals for technical education. Once more, history provided a powerful motivating force in attempts at industrial revival: such education, Ghose declared, could help Indians 'regain their rightful position amongst the people of the world'. Regretting that 'Practical Mechanics or Engineering' did not figure in the curricula of schools or colleges, he held up the example of France—citing George Sand's descriptions of mechanics' work and training—as something for India to emulate.⁷³

By the time that a Bengali *bhadralok* invoked a French novelist to call for Indian technical education, a new model from abroad was captivating the attention of advocates of industrialization. That model was the Great Exhibition of 1851. In the year of this dazzling spectacle, George Buist anxiously pleaded with Indian elites to travel to London to learn about the latest scientific wonders and modern methods of manufacturing: 'What are the Nizam, the Guicowar, the Rao of Cutch, the Rajah of Travancore, and the rest, thinking about, that they do not get up and set off to see the show?'⁷⁴ Ultimately, both royals and merchant princes did not have to worry about making the trip overseas. The model set in 1851 in London soon came to them, spawning exhibitions across the length and breadth of the subcontinent.

Rejoinders to 1851: Exhibiting inventive talent for modern industry

The Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, as the 1851 event was officially known, presented Indian manufacturing to the world as an article of history. Inside the Crystal Palace were Indian products of breath-taking design and quality, yet they were portrayed as items 'from a crumbling past', mere museum pieces out of step with modern industrial advances.⁷⁵ The exhibition also lent weight to one particular narrative of deindustrialization: that the decline of Indian manufacturing stemmed from the rudeness and primitiveness of subcontinental technologies. India's blunt tools were vividly contrasted with the latest technological wonders of Europe in neighbouring alcoves.⁷⁶

⁷²Deepak Kumar, *Science and the Raj: A study of British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006; 2nd edn), p. 196.

⁷³Grish Chunder Ghose, *Selections from the writings of Grish Chunder Ghose*, (ed.) Manmathanath Ghosh (Calcutta: Indian Daily News Press, 1912), pp. 140, 141, 142. For another early public appeal for technical education, made by the Maharashtrian polymath Bal Gangadhar Shastri Jambhekar in 1839, see G. G. Jambhekar (ed.), *Memoirs and writings of Āchārya Bāl Gangādhār Shāstri Jāmbhekar, 1812–1846: Pioneer of the renaissance in western India and father of modern Mahārāshtra* (Poona: G. G. Jambhekar, 1950), vol. 2, p. 139.

⁷⁴'Is Nobody Going from India to See the Show?', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 1 March 1851, p. 151.

⁷⁵Asa Briggs, *Victorian things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 62.

⁷⁶Lara Kriegel, 'Narrating the subcontinent: India at the Crystal Palace', in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New interdisciplinary essays*, (ed.) Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 158, 159.

Despite this pronouncedly backward-looking focus, the grand affair of 1851 inculcated an enduring Indian interest in exhibitions as a means to stimulate modern industry. George Buist's exhortation to attend the Great Exhibition might have gone unheeded, but Indians travelled abroad for subsequent exhibitions held in Europe: in 1855, for example, Dadabhai Naoroji marvelled at displays of technology at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, dispatching detailed descriptions to the Gujarati paper *Rāst Goftār* in Bombay.⁷⁷ Even those unable to travel to Paris, like the evident Francophile Grish Chunder Ghose, celebrated the Exposition Universelle, suggesting that a similar event might be held in India.⁷⁸ Ghose was not alone in thinking along such lines. Increasingly, Indians sought to replicate these events in their own towns and cities—and on their own terms, without Anglo-Indian guidance and partnership. Exhibitions would allow Indians to refute ideas of technological and industrial backwardness, looking to the future instead.

The Great Exhibition, along with the first attempts at staging exhibitions in India, came at a time of sweeping political and economic change involving questions of indigenous manufacturing and modern industry. In 1854, Cowaji Nanabhai Davar floated the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company, which established the first successful modern textile mill owned by Indians. By 1861, the first textile mill was humming in Ahmedabad, operated by Ranchhodlal Chhotlal. Politically, however, narratives of deindustrialization leapt back into the forefront of activity and debate. Some of the first modern Indian political organizations, such as the Bombay Association and Calcutta's British Indian Association, complained about official indifference to Indian manufacturing in petitions they sent to parliament concerning the Charter Act of 1853.⁷⁹ But the cause of Indian industry was not just confined to the formalities of constitutional politics; it was held aloft by the leaders of the Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857. The Azamgarh Proclamation, for example, excoriated British rule for destroying the livelihoods of weavers, carpenters, and other artisans. It promised that, under a future 'Badshahi government', such artisans would be 'exclusively employed'. As a further fillip to indigenous industry and commerce, the proclamation promised merchants the free use of 'government steam-vessels and steam carriages'. It even pledged that merchants could dip into the public treasury as a source of capital.⁸⁰

All of these developments hinted at a broader trend. After several decades of cooperation between Indians and Britons—with Indians regularly as the junior partners, as in the case of Buist's educational endeavours—Indians were beginning to seize the initiative in programmes of industrial revival. There were still noteworthy bursts of activism among Britons and Anglo-Indians, such as the pamphleteering blitzkrieg of the India Reform Society. This society, established in London during debate over the Charter Act of 1853, condemned government policies for destroying indigenous

⁷⁷'Pāriśnu egjibīśan', *Rāst Goftār*, 16 December 1855, pp. 399–400; 'Pāriśnu egjibīśan', *Rāst Goftār*, 23 December 1855, pp. 407–408; 'Pāriśnu ekjibīśan', *Rāst Goftār*, 30 December 1855, pp. 418–419.

⁷⁸Ghose, *Selections from the writings of Grish Chunder Ghose*, pp. 143–144.

⁷⁹*First Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories; Together with the Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (London: House of Commons, 1853), pp. 479, 494.

⁸⁰Rachel Fell McDermott et al. (eds), *Sources of Indian traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014; 3rd edn), vol. 2, pp. 100, 101.

manufacturing (Buist authored one of its pamphlets).⁸¹ But such voices dwindled in the post-Mutiny years and were, in any case, overshadowed by those of Indians. Exhibitions provided the best demonstration of this dynamic.

The first commercial and industrial exhibitions in India were largely organized by British officials: for example, those held in Madras from 1853 onwards or similar events in Lucknow, Lahore, and Roorkee in the remainder of the 1850s. Furthermore, several of these British organizers had earlier played leading roles in pedagogical institutions for promoting manufacturing. Alexander Hunter was one of the principal organizers of the Madras exhibitions, which featured the products of his industrial school.⁸² Many of these exhibitions also served explicitly imperial purposes that went beyond simply opening new markets to British goods. The early Madras exhibitions coincided with the Crimean War and, not surprisingly, one of their objectives was to stimulate the production of goods made out of fibre such as hemp to compensate for supplies shut off from Russian markets.⁸³ Like the displays in the Crystal Palace, these exhibitions also reinforced the dichotomy between advanced European technology and rudimentary Indian implements: a visitor to the 1865 Oude Exhibition in Lucknow, for example, vividly contrasted displays of British-made machinery with ‘very inferior’ products of indigenous manufacture.⁸⁴ In this way, British-run exhibitions could continue to classify Indian manufactures as things of the past, lavishing attention on traditional handicrafts but holding little interest in indigenous attempts in modern industry. They bore a close resemblance to exhibitions in Ireland immediately after 1851, where sophisticated British industrial wares outshone the patchy output of domestic workshops.⁸⁵

In a few cases, exhibitions sprung from cooperation between Britons and Indians. While these events gave greater attention to the development of modern Indian industry, they did so through the specific medium of imported Western technology and machinery, replicating another dynamic from the Great Exhibition. In 1868, the Bharuch exhibition, which displayed a rich variety of Gujarati textile goods, attracted the patronage of princely rulers from Baroda, Junagadh, Jamnagar, Rajpipla, and Porbandar—as well as the active participation of the Manchester Cotton Supply Association. It was designed with a clear pedagogical purpose to ‘exhibit to the natives of the Province’ certain British-produced machinery and ‘to teach our native fellow subjects, the advantage not only of industry, but of applying science and all the newest machinery to the improvement of the country’.⁸⁶ Here, as in the industrial schools and technical institutes from the 1840s and 1850s, was the same model of European instruction to Indian audiences—and the same message about the inferiority of Indian methods of production.

⁸¹ *India Reform. No. III. Notes on India, by Dr. Buist of Bombay* (London: Saunders and Stanford, n.d.).

⁸² ‘Official and Descriptive Catalogue of the Madras Exhibition of 1855’, *Calcutta Review*, March 1856, pp. 267, 270.

⁸³ ‘The Madras Exhibition’, *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 23 December 1854, p. 4980.

⁸⁴ ‘The Lucknow Exhibition’, *Pioneer*, 16 January 1865, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history, 1780–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 309. For a detailed study of exhibitions in Ireland, see Shahmima Akhtar, *Exhibiting Irishness: Empire, race and nation, c. 1850–1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024).

⁸⁶ ‘The Broach Exhibition’, *Madras Mail*, 4 January 1869, p. 2.

An exhibition in Hyderabad in 1856 was a harbinger of change.⁸⁷ While its chief organizer was an Anglo-Indian doctor, the princely state's reform-minded diwan, Salar Jung I, served as its guiding force, amassing finances, collections, and support from Indian benefactors.⁸⁸ The result was an exhibition with a remarkably different focus and purpose, entirely geared towards the promotion of indigenous products and technologies. Amid displays of textiles, jewellery, and raw materials were exhibits of Indian implements such as the charkha, cotton cleaners, oil presses, and the tools of ironsmiths and coppersmiths. More significant was an array of inventions by subjects of the diwan: clocks, surgical implements, different types of firearms, and devices producing optical illusions. Such displays demonstrated an innovative technological streak among Indians as well as the continued utility of certain indigenous apparatuses. Imported Western machinery was conspicuously absent. Unlike the representation of India in the Crystal Palace or British-administered exhibitions in the subcontinent, the Hyderabad exhibition did not dwell on a dead or supposedly irrecoverable past. An official catalogue declared its goal to be the stimulation of 'an industrial spirit in the Native Community', thereby creating 'a hopeful starting point for the future'.⁸⁹

The event in Hyderabad set a precedent for further exhibitions of indigenous technology, talent, and manufactures. From 1867 until 1880, Nabagopal Mitra, with help from the Tagore family, organized the annual Hindu Mela in Calcutta. The Mela's primary focus was on art, physical culture, and music, but it also exhibited Indian manufactured products and inventions, such as an improved charkha displayed in 1871.⁹⁰ While scholars have cited the Hindu Mela as an important precursor to twentieth-century swadeshi activity, far more significant developments taking place in Poona have gone largely unnoticed.⁹¹ In 1872, Mahadev Govind Ranade, recently assigned to Poona as a subordinate judge, delivered two lectures in Marathi in which he excoriated India's dependence on foreign goods.⁹² These lectures probably inspired a small exhibition held in April 1874, which might have received encouragement from Tukoji Rao Holkar II of Indore. Ranade joined other prominent Poona citizens to display indigenously produced items such as clothing, matches, and candles. Significantly, the Anglo-Marathi *Native Opinion* described these as 'svadēśīya māl' (swadeshi items).⁹³

⁸⁷Amanda Lanzillo's recent work demonstrates the pioneering role of several Muslim-ruled princely states—Hyderabad, Rampur, and Bhopal—in new exhibition practices in India. Amanda Lanzillo, 'Princely prisons, state exhibitions, and Muslim industrial authority in colonial India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, forthcoming.

⁸⁸'Spirit of the Indian press: The Hyderabad Exhibition', *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 27 August 1856, p. 549; 'The Exhibition at Hydrabad', *Friend of India*, 4 December 1856, pp. 1156–1157.

⁸⁹Italics in the original text. *Catalogue of the Hyderabad Exhibition* (Secunderabad: Columbian Press, 1856), pp. 25, 26, iii.

⁹⁰Sumit Sarkar, 'The pattern and structure of early nationalist activity in Bengal', in *Essays of a lifetime: Reformers, nationalists, subalterns* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), p. 71; Partha Mitter, *Art and nationalism in colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 222.

⁹¹Chandra, *The rise and growth of economic nationalism in India*, p. 123; Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, p. 95.

⁹²M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, 20 October 1875, p. 3; Mahadev Govind Ranade, *Vyāpārāsambandhī Vyāvṛvyanē* (Pune: Gokhale Arthaśāstra Sansthā, 1963).

⁹³'Pune Kauśalyaśikśak Maṅḍlī', *Native Opinion*, 5 April 1874, p. 220; *Native Opinion*, 18 January 1874, p. 44.

By the early 1870s, therefore, the term 'swadeshi' was already in popular circulation in the vernacular papers of western India.

This small exhibit led to bigger things. In the summer dust and heat of 1875, a group of Maharashtrian political leaders and educators helped throw open the Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures. Ranade was one of the chief guests and speakers at the 1875 exhibition, along with the scholar and politician Kashinath Trimbak Telang, G. V. Joshi of the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha, the school headmaster and industrial enthusiast M. M. Kunte, and the princely ruler of Kurundwad. Together, these organizers and patrons hoped that the Poona exhibition would be 'of immense advantage in rousing people to activity and in introducing improvements in articles of indigenous manufacture', just as similar events had done 'in England, France and Germany'.⁹⁴

How did the Poona exhibition portray such indigenous industry? Like Salar Jung's event in Hyderabad, the exhibition highlighted Indian inventive talent, demonstrating that Indians could modernize their own technologies or create entirely new contraptions of industrial utility. On display were an 'improved native loom', an Indian-made weaving machine, and a device developed by a Bombay firm for producing gold and silver thread.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Poona exhibition emphasized the ability of such inventions and indigenous products to turn handsome profits—and attract Indian investors. Dinshaw Manockjee Petit, the textile mill baron from Bombay, inspected a spinning machine invented by a certain More Krishna Bhaskar and promised financial assistance. Petit also pledged support for a candlemaker whose products were of such high quality that one commentator on the exhibition—most likely Ranade—remarked that his financial 'success is assured'. He also played up the promise of firecrackers manufactured in Sholapur. 'First-rate in their quality', these products deserved 'the sympathy and money help of the rich capitalists' since 'there can be no doubt that many lakhs of rupees might be invested in this manufacture without satisfying the home demand', especially during Diwali celebrations.⁹⁶

The Poona exhibition, therefore, deliberately sought to marry Indian capital—specifically the capital being generated in new textile mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad—with indigenous talent. Whereas an earlier generation of activists, such as the Maharashtrian intellectuals of the 1840s, had conceptualized a role for Bombay magnates as patrons of industrial training, Ranade and his colleagues actually sought out their financial investment: 'If they lend the helping hand to the poor inventors ... success in some of their undertakings is absolutely certain.'⁹⁷ Indeed, these appeals yielded some successes. During its 1876 incarnation, the Poona exhibition featured the Bombay industrialist Morarji Goculdas as its chief guest. At the same time, organizers sought out princely patronage. The ruler of Sangli served as president of the 1876 exhibition; two years later, the diwan of Kutch and Holkar of Indore bankrolled displays and

⁹⁴'Exhibition of native arts and manufactures', *Indian Statesman*, 26 May 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁵M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, p. 3; 'The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Times of India*, 4 June 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁶While the author of this article is only listed as 'M. G. R.', it is quite obviously Ranade. M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, p. 3.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

prizes.⁹⁸ Baroda played a particularly active role: the gaikwad's palace lent its collection of indigenously produced firearms and weapons.⁹⁹ T. Madhava Rao, the princely state's intrepid diwan, sponsored prizes for inventors who could recreate presumably foreign-made articles ranging from paper cutters to silver coffee filters.¹⁰⁰

The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures, therefore, represented a remarkable convergence of political and economic actors: western Indian political leaders, Bombay industrialists, and princely rulers and officials. Whereas these actors had played roles in previous endeavours—such as Buist's industrial school—this was perhaps the first time that they joined forces in such a marked attempt at industrial stimulus, independent of British leadership and intervention. And there were other reasons why the Poona exhibition was significant. Unlike the earlier affair in Hyderabad, which focused on goods produced within the nizam's territories, the Poona organizers appear to have vigorously sought out pan-Indian participation, providing a kaleidoscope of a more national economy. The 1876 exhibition included embroidery work from Karachi, ivory manufactures from Calcutta, paper produced in Banaras, and marblework from Agra and Jabalpur.¹⁰¹ At the same time, the exhibition employed regional history to convey a sense of India's past greatness—both political and economic. Adorning the event were images of Maratha figures such as Nana Fadnavis.¹⁰² Maratha weapons were prominently displayed, along with what were claimed to be the actual 'tiger claws' used by Shivaji to kill Afzal Khan in 1659.¹⁰³ These exhibits represented early incarnations of a nationalist-tinged cult of Shivaji and Maratha power, conveying a not-too-subtle political message of resistance to foreign rule.

European reaction to the Poona exhibition was mixed. Event organizers welcomed British dignitaries, including Philip Wodehouse, the governor of Bombay. One Anglo-Indian visitor, encouraged to visit the exhibition by 'the zeal and patriotism of an indefatigable native friend', was visibly impressed. 'A European visitor to this exhibition,' he noted, 'cannot but return with the impression that native genius has not as yet entirely died out, and that a little judicious rivalry would work wonders.'¹⁰⁴ Others were less charitable. The *Madras Mail* complained that manufactures on display proved that Indians were 'deficient in intellect', lacking the ability to properly innovate their own technologies and methods of production.¹⁰⁵ It mocked the display of Maratha weapons, finding it ridiculous that 'the natives would have us to believe that the tiger claws ... were the identical ones used by Sewajee on this occasion'.¹⁰⁶

Here, the *Madras Mail* largely missed the point. Authentic or not, those tiger claws portended a new wave of patriotic economic activism which could encompass overt hostility towards British imports—and Britons themselves.

⁹⁸'The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Times of India*, 28 June 1876, p. 3; 'Opening of the Poona Exhibition', *Madras Weekly Mail*, 12 June 1878, p. 688.

⁹⁹'The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Times of India*, 26 May 1875, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰'The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Times of India*, 28 June 1876, p. 3.

¹⁰¹*ibid.*

¹⁰²'Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Indian Statesman*, p. 3.

¹⁰³'Opening of the Poona Exhibition', *Madras Weekly Mail*, p. 688.

¹⁰⁴'The Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures', *Times of India*, 4 June 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵'Poona Native Art and Manufacture Exhibition', *Madras Mail*, 9 May 1878.

¹⁰⁶'Opening of the Poona Exhibition', *Madras Weekly Mail*, p. 688.

Patriotism, profits, and self-reliance: The rise of associations

By the time that Mahadev Govind Ranade and his colleagues inaugurated the first Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures, a third and final model was emerging for promoting indigenous industries: associations or sabhas established to popularize, manufacture, and market Indian goods. As we have seen, the idea of forming associations for industrial revival was not new—but something was unique about the associational activity which began in the early 1870s.

First, it took place on a truly subcontinental scale. The initial associations were founded in Bombay and the Marathi-speaking heartland—Poona, Satara, Sholapur, and Nagpur—but the model was eventually attempted as far east as Calcutta and Dacca and as far south as Bangalore. By 1880, associations had arrived in Punjab, where a Singh Sabha was established to discuss ‘native manufactures’ and the possibility of organizing an industrial exhibition.¹⁰⁷

Gujarat became an especially important fulcrum of associational activity, cross-fertilized by influences from Bombay and Poona. Figures like the poet and scholar Dalpatram provided the initial intellectual impetus: as early as 1851, he had penned a lengthy poem titled ‘Hindustān upar Hunnarkhānnī chaḍhāi’ (King Industry’s Attack upon India), an allegorical account of how India’s economy had collapsed under assault from British industry. His poem concluded with an exhortation for Indians to adopt new skills, industry, and machinery.¹⁰⁸ Dalpatram was the long-time editor of the Gujarati journal *Buddhiprakāś* which, much like the *Bombay Times* under George Buist, lavished attention on new technology, industry, and inventions in places like Great Britain and the United States.¹⁰⁹ By the mid-1870s, its articles increasingly employed the vocabulary of swadeshi. *Buddhiprakāś* chronicled associational activity, such as the establishment in 1875 of the Ahmedabad Swadesh Udyogvardhak Mandali (Society for the Promotion of Swadeshi Industry), which drew on the patronage of the industrialist Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, the Gujarati intellectual and reformer Ambalal Sakarlal Desai, and Lokahitavadi (who, as a judge, had been transferred to Ahmedabad, where he helped impart swadeshi ideas and methods from Maharashtra).¹¹⁰

Second, the activities of these associations were eagerly transmitted across the country by newspapers and a flurry of correspondence. New associations in interior Maharashtra prompted newspapers in Bombay and Surat to demand similar organizations in their cities. Increased travel and communication across the subcontinent shaped associational strategies: when the Gujarati reformer Hargovindas Dwarkadas Kantavala suggested establishing a special fund to financially support swadeshi activity, he drew upon a particular model employed in southern India.¹¹¹ Occasionally, these associations communicated directly with one another. A swadeshi sabha founded in Ahmedabad in 1876 sent appeals as far away as Calcutta for information on local industries that had existed before their destruction via foreign imports. ‘To check the growing evil and to save our dear country from further ruin, societies are formed, or

¹⁰⁷ ‘Social Science Society’, *Times of India*, 7 June 1880, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Dalpat Kāvya: Bhāg Bijō* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society, 1924), pp. 26–33.

¹⁰⁹ Yagnik and Sheth, *The shaping of modern Gujarat*, p. 158.

¹¹⁰ ‘Āmdāvād Svadeś Udyogvardhak Mandlī’, *Buddhiprakāś*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1876, pp. 20–21.

¹¹¹ ‘Deśikārigarine Uttejan: Ānk Trijo’, *Buddhiprakāś*, vol. 23, no. 12, December 1876, p. 266.

are being formed in several cities of India,' declared one of the society's circulars. 'It is highly desirable that these patriotic associations should correspond and assist each other.'¹¹² Critically, associations also facilitated the travel of swadeshi advocates across regions, undergirding networks of ideas with personal connections. Lokहितavadi, for example, invited at least one colleague from the Deccan to speak in Ahmedabad about indigenous industry, something which added new vigour and vitality to swadeshi activity in Gujarat's historic capital.¹¹³

Third, these associations combined patriotism with profit-making. Their ambit was not the mere revival of indigenous manufacturing, but the establishment of industrial concerns that were economically remunerative. And there certainly was money to be made: at precisely the same time, as Douglas Haynes has noted, shifting consumer demands buoyed the development of 'small town capitalism' in parts of western India, breathing new life into handloom weaving. A later, larger-scale example of how swadeshi and profit were linked was Jamsetji N. Tata's establishment of the Svadeshi Mills in Bombay in 1886, producing textile exports for the Chinese market.¹¹⁴ Societies in Maharashtra and Gujarat formed joint-stock companies and opened stores to market indigenous wares, especially cloth. Some of these stores prided themselves on effective management and returned profits as high as 10 per cent to their investors.¹¹⁵ These associations, furthermore, mustered the interest and involvement of the commercial elite. In Surat, a certain Nawab Mir Sayyed Alumkhan organized a meeting of 1,500 of the city's merchants and community leaders to lay the foundations for the Association for the Promotion of Native Manufacturing Skill. Thereafter, the association launched a joint-stock company to raise a whopping Rs 25,000 in capital—with plans to make as many as 5,000 shares available to the general public.¹¹⁶ Across the subcontinent in Bengal, Jyotirindranath Tagore and Rajnarain Bose established the Sanjibani Sabha—which included in its ranks a young Rabindranath Tagore—to open a match factory, a weaving company, and, later, a steamship service specifically designed to undercut British competition.¹¹⁷

Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, these associations popularized certain ideas for reviving indigenous industry: self-reliance and the non-consumption of British imports. An association in Bangalore pledged to replace Manchester textile goods with indigenous products, while members of a Rajkot society undertook a vow to foreswear all foreign goods to 'create taste for native things'.¹¹⁸ Societies in Maharashtra, meanwhile, required members to stop purchasing European manufactured items when

¹¹²'The Revival of Native Manufactures', *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22 June 1876, p. 2.

¹¹³Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *Ahmedabad: From royal city to megacity* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2011), p. 178.

¹¹⁴Douglas E. Haynes, *Small town capitalism in western India: Artisans, merchants and the making of the informal economy, 1870–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapter 3; Raianu, *Tata*, pp. 23–24. Tata's christening of his new venture as Svadeshi Mills was no doubt influenced by the recent establishment of the Indian National Congress. Mircea Raianu tells me that he was unable to locate any archival evidence for Tata's precise reasoning behind this choice of name. Email correspondence, 10 July 2022.

¹¹⁵M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, p. 3.

¹¹⁶'Bombay', *Pioneer*, 15 June 1876, p. 4.

¹¹⁷Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, pp. 109–110.

¹¹⁸Bholanath Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section IV', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, May 1876, p. 12.

Indian-made equivalents were available at approximately the same price. They also celebrated 'some enthusiastic members who have vowed not to use any foreign manufactured article under any conditions', such as G. V. Joshi of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.¹¹⁹ These activities were popularized through methods that reached well beyond an English-reading elite: Gujarati poems which promoted indigenous crafts, speeches in villages and towns across the Bombay presidency, and Bengali songs lamenting India's depressed economic and political condition in comparison with China, Burma, and even 'barbarous Japan'.¹²⁰ And it is impossible not to notice a tone of anti-foreign hostility emerging from this new associational landscape—something that was largely absent in earlier attempts at creating institutions or organizing exhibitions. When a shop opened in Nagpur in 1873 to market Indian-produced cotton goods, a Marathi paper could barely contain its glee at the possibility of dislodging British competition: 'The European manufacturers of cloth will now have to die of starvation! Beware O, ye Englishmen of Native patriotism!!'¹²¹

What explains this sudden sharpening of sentiments? It is important to remember that the 1870s constituted a pivotal decade in the development of economic nationalism in India, something that spread awareness of the imperative to industrialize. In the Deccan, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha conducted detailed surveys highlighting the depressed conditions of rural denizens. Through the Fawcett Committee, Indian political leaders and their British allies brought the issues of Indian poverty and deindustrialization all the way to parliament in Westminster. This was also a decade when Indians developed ideas about indigenous industry through sustained engagement with the works of certain European political economists. In papers delivered before London and Bombay audiences where he fine-tuned his drain theory, Dadabhai Naoroji drew particularly upon John Stuart Mill's writings. He cited Mill to argue that poor countries like India required vigorous industrial development but that, simultaneously, India's colonial position put it at the mercy of foreign imports. Mill, furthermore, demonstrated that industry required capital, which gave Naoroji the perfect opportunity to excoriate British policy for draining away this vital resource.¹²²

Naoroji's work was complemented by that of Mahadev Govind Ranade, whose 1872 addresses in Poona played a more direct role in inspiring the establishment of the first associations across Maharashtra. Ranade echoed Naoroji's ideas about a drain of wealth but broke new ground in the idea of self-reliance. It is unclear when Ranade first encountered the work of Friedrich List, whose ideas he was enthusiastically endorsing by the early 1890s, but his 1872 talks contained the germ of Listian thought on the importance of national economic development. He decried the 'imbecility' of India's dependence on foreign goods 'although the raw materials lie at our doors in tempting profusion'. Turning to the United States as an example of a country similarly 'highly favoured by nature', he urged India 'to become self-dependent in these matters'.¹²³

¹¹⁹M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, p. 3.

¹²⁰'Pracuraṅ Bābato', *Buddhiprakāś*, vol. 23, no. 11, November 1876, p. 263; Pal, *Memories of my life and times*, pp. 256, 257.

¹²¹'Epitome of News', *Native Opinion*, 12 October 1873, p. 649.

¹²²Naoroji, *Essays, speeches, addresses and writings*, pp. 105, 101.

¹²³M. G. R., 'Employment for the middle classes', *Times of India*, p. 3.

Ideas of self-reliance gathered pace from the 1860s onwards, in multiple arenas. Mahendra Lal Sircar, who founded the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science in 1876, called for self-reliance through scientific education.¹²⁴ Surendranath Banerjea roused Calcutta citizens to embrace ‘the great doctrine of self-reliance’ as outlined by the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini.¹²⁵ In the domain of business and industrial promotion, self-reliance emerged from a complex series of economic factors, both subcontinental and global in scope. Indian writers and economic thinkers took part in a broader wave of disenchantment with free trade sweeping the British empire—and a consequent resurgence of protectionist sentiment (Ireland was, once more, a much-studied point of reference). Free trade between India and the United Kingdom, Naoroji told a Bombay audience in 1876, ‘is something like a race between a starving, exhaust[ed] invalid and a strong man with horse to ride on’.¹²⁶

To rally support for protectionism, some Indians turned to the complex history of Anglo-Indian economic relations. The *Native Opinion* of Bombay, edited by the lawyer and politician Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik, pointed out that in 1700 the English parliament had taken the extraordinary step of banning Indian textile imports which were then inundating the domestic market—and that writers like Daniel Defoe had loudly complained about how Indian textiles had decimated the English wool economy. The situation in India was now ‘a thousand times worse than that of England so much lamented by De Foe [*sic*]’, which necessitated vigorous support for India’s incipient textile mill economy and other attempts at industrialization, such as coal mining in Raniganj and Tukoji Rao Holkar II’s plans for an iron industry in Indore. Mandlik’s broadsheet stressed a policy of self-reliance—through private enterprise, deliberate consumer patronization of ‘country-made-goods’, and non-consumption of British textiles—but also expected government support for the Indian textile industry. ‘We say that Government is bound to support it, since it has been instrumental in bringing about its entire ruin’, the *Native Opinion* declared, with a final nod to history.¹²⁷

As associations spread across India, narratives of deindustrialization shifted away from the rudimentary nature of subcontinental technologies and—as in the 1830s and 1840s—towards particular imperial policies and the rapacity of British commercial interests. Controversy over the Indian Tariff Act of 1875, where London pressured the Indian government to abolish certain import duties that Manchester and Lancashire lobbies deemed to be protectionist, incensed Indian opinion. Layered on top of this were the lingering effects of the American Civil War which, as Sven Beckert has demonstrated, had titanic economic consequences in the subcontinent. The war pushed up the price of Indian cotton and thereby put many spinners and weavers out of business. Peace between the North and the South then caused the price of Indian cotton to crater and squeezed Indian merchants out of the cotton export trade.¹²⁸ Should it be any

¹²⁴Mahendra Lal Sircar, ‘On the Desirability of Cultivation of the Sciences by the Natives of India’, *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*, vol. 2, no. 8, August 1869, pp. 289, 290.

¹²⁵Surendranath Banerjea, *Speeches and writings of Babu Surendranath Banerjea* (Madras: G. A. Natesan and Co., n.d.), pp. 414–415.

¹²⁶Naoroji, *Essays, speeches, addresses and writings*, p. 217.

¹²⁷‘Revival of the Cotton Industry of India’, *Native Opinion*, 21 December 1873, pp. 801, 802.

¹²⁸Beckert, *Empire of cotton*, Chapter 11.

surprise that the first associations to promote indigenous goods formed in precisely those areas of India most affected by the postwar cotton slump—the cotton-growing areas of Gujarat and interior Maharashtra as well as in the cottonopolises of Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bharuch, and Nagpur?

Indian associational activity, and the emergence of an ethos of self-reliance, were thus direct responses to imperial and global influences. And perhaps no one better articulated this connection than Bholanath Chandra. Chandra was a Bengali writer and businessman who had been embittered by his own commercial experiences: he had worked for Calcutta's Union Bank, which failed spectacularly in 1847, and then witnessed his own trading firm go bankrupt in 1863.¹²⁹ Through extensive travel in northern and western India, he was uniquely placed to observe the transmission of new economic ideas across the subcontinent and the increasing interconnectedness of India's political and economic actors. Between 1873 and 1876, Chandra published a five-part series titled 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India' in *Mookerjee's Magazine* of Calcutta. His essays were long-winded, repetitive, and laced with chauvinism. His economic views—such as his hostility to any type of imports into India—could be overly simplistic. But, even more than Naoroji and Ranade, Chandra encapsulated the spirit of the times. He observed the associational activity sweeping India and declared that Indians were finally waking up to the economic realities of colonial rule: they now realized that economic subjugation was 'an insidious evil which has noiselessly effaced all their arts and crafts, and brought on an abject dependence upon foreign industry'.¹³⁰ Once more, the timing was important. The second instalment of his series heralded the Fawcett Committee in parliament, while the last fulminated against the Tariff Act of 1875. Above all, Chandra relied heavily upon history—both Indian and global—to justify a specific policy of industrial regeneration through self-reliance, again demonstrating how ideas of India's past manufacturing prowess animated efforts at economic revival.

India, Chandra boldly declared, was 'the first manufacturing nation', a global pioneer which had 'taught the most useful and valuable arts to mankind'.¹³¹ He abhorred the 'untruth' that his country was merely an 'agricultural nation'.¹³² In ancient times, India's domination of global manufacturing was so complete that it barely imported any goods. By excelling in the manufacture of everything from metalworks to cotton textiles, and through imperial exploits in places like Java and Bali, Indians created an international system of 'true free Trade, and not the pretended Free Trade of the present age'.¹³³ How, then, did India reach its current degraded state? Here, Chandra turned to the two principal narratives of deindustrialization. He was biting critical of Indians' lack of innovation: in an era when the West was being transformed by modern

¹²⁹Sarkar, 'The pattern and structure of early nationalist activity in Bengal', p. 65.

¹³⁰Bholanath Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, March 1873, pp. 84–85.

¹³¹Bholanath Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section 2', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, December 1873, pp. 618, 619.

¹³²Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, p. 90.

¹³³Bholanath Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section II', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, June 1873, pp. 257, 269.

machinery, 'India would still ply her *charká*, and still print by the hand block'.¹³⁴ But the true source of India's manufacturing downfall was British policy. Britons, especially the Manchester and Lancashire textile lobbies, had invoked the principle of free trade to enrich themselves upon 'the ruins of Indian arts and industries'.¹³⁵ They had created an extractive economic system which was 'abnormal, and in contradiction with the truths of political economy'. Chandra specifically cited the absurdity of India exporting raw cotton to Britain, only to receive imports of finished textile goods from the mother country. Like commentators from earlier in the nineteenth century, he drew a parallel with slavery: 'It may be doubted whether, with the exception of the slave trade, any spectacle so scandalous as the maintenance of this traffic by force has been given to the world by any civilized nation.'¹³⁶

The Indian government, Chandra believed, had a sworn responsibility to undo this pernicious system by encouraging Indian industry, 'fostering the enterprise of our people', and providing 'commercial and industrial education'.¹³⁷ He demanded heavy duties on British imports and the abolition of all export duties—Chandra even invoked the ambition of 'Self-Government' so that India could set its own tariff policies. Over and above this, however, Chandra believed that Indians had a personal duty to resist their economic subjugation. He was quick to turn to global history for precedents, citing, like *Native Opinion*, the English parliament's decision in 1700 to ban Indian textile imports. But he also looked to colonial America, extolling Americans' 'quick political sagacity' for boycotting British tea or, as in the case of the Boston Tea Party, simply dumping and destroying foreign goods. Napoleon's Continental System, likewise, piqued Chandra's interest: it was an example of how a people could inflict 'serious injury' on British industry while stimulating the domestic economy through a form of import substitution industrialization.¹³⁸

All of these examples reinforced Chandra's overriding point: that individuals could shape India's industrial regeneration as consumers and entrepreneurs. 'Self-help is a tower of strength,' he declared in 1876. 'Let us always remember that the progress of India rests with the people themselves, and that her material prosperity must spring more from their own energy, perseverance and self-reliance, than from any modification of the existing laws.' Condemning the fashionability of British goods, Chandra called upon his fellow Indians to embark upon a policy of 'moral hostility' towards Manchester and Lancashire by resolving to 'non-consume the goods of England'.¹³⁹ 'A bit of patriotism to refuse to buy foreign goods', he declared, could help Indians 'dethrone King Cotton of Manchester' and thereby 're-establish their sway in the cotton-world'.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section IV', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, May 1876, p. 3.

¹³⁵Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section 2', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, p. 559.

¹³⁶Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section IV', pp. 45, 46.

¹³⁷Bholanath Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section III', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, August 1874, p. 378.

¹³⁸Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section IV', pp. 48, 17, 11, 36.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

¹⁴⁰Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section 2', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, p. 621.

Chandra once more cast his sights on the wider world to drive home his point. India required 'an instinct of self-preservation' like the countries of continental Europe, the United States, and Japan. New cotton mills in Bombay and Calcutta proved that Indians were capable of adapting 'new-fashioned plans and principles' from around the world for industrial rejuvenation.¹⁴¹ With entrepreneurship on the one hand, and self-reliance through individual and associational activity on the other, Indians could reverse the humiliating experience of 'industrial slavery'. And thus, Chandra concluded, India could 'regain her normal position, and be with America the two great centres of the world's commerce'.¹⁴²

Conclusion: Swadeshi before the Swadeshi Movement

During the 1880s and 1890s, India witnessed a dramatic upsurge in swadeshi activity, a vital precursor to the Swadeshi Movement. While its scope and popularity widened considerably, swadeshi activity from the 1880s onwards retained, at its core, the three institutional innovations which had been pioneered decades beforehand: institutes for technical and industrial education, exhibitions, and associations. Swadeshi enthusiasts further evolved techniques of boycott first mooted in the 1830s and ideas of self-reliance developed in the 1870s. Above all, swadeshi activity was propelled by ever-expanding horizons of global connections and comparisons.

A few examples illustrate these dynamics at work. In the realm of technical education, Ross Bassett has demonstrated how the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) captivated the imagination of Poona intellectuals, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak.¹⁴³ This interest in MIT stemmed from a broader phenomenon: how Indians thought of technical education through a vividly transnational prism. Other Indians sketched out plans for technical institutes based on European models, such as the Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich.¹⁴⁴ In Baroda, under the watchful eye of Sayajirao Gaikwad, the chemist and swadeshi industrialist T. K. Gajjar built up the Kala Bhavan technical institute by recruiting German professors and forging ties with German chemical firms.¹⁴⁵ Organizations like the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, meanwhile, advocated technical education abroad, including in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States.¹⁴⁶ By the Sino-Japanese War, Indian interest had swung eastwards, with the *Mahratta* urging Indians to use Japan as 'a capital training school'.¹⁴⁷ Indian exhibitions possessed a similar global vision. In 1888, leaders in the Deccan revived the Poona Exhibition of Native Arts and Manufactures, which displayed Indian proficiency in the latest global technology, including electric motors and the electric telephone. The Poona exhibition—like other Indian-organized events in the 1880s and 1890s, such as the first Dasara Exhibition held in Mysore in

¹⁴¹Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section IV', pp. 25, 44.

¹⁴²Chandra, 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India. Section II', pp. 110, 120.

¹⁴³Ross Bassett, *The technological Indian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁴V. M. Samarth, 'The Polytechnic School (Polytechnikum) of Zürich', *Indian Magazine and Review*, no. 261, September 1892, pp. 481–491.

¹⁴⁵Dhruv Raina and S. Irfan Habib, 'Technical institutes in colonial India: Kala Bhavan, Baroda (1890–1990)', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 26, no. 46, 16 November 1991, p. 2621.

¹⁴⁶'An appeal', *Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha*, vol. IV, no. 3, January 1882, pp. 30–33.

¹⁴⁷'Japan as a Training School for Indians', *Mahratta*, 19 July 1896.

1888—consciously modelled itself on recent international exhibitions and stressed India's interconnectivity with the global economy, including the potential for manufactured exports.¹⁴⁸ Finally, a new wave of associations in the 1890s entrenched swadeshi activity from Punjab through to Bengal, popularizing swadeshi terminology through organizational names (such as the Swadesh Vastu Pracharak Sabha in Lahore) and references to 'swadeshi associations' and 'the swadeshi movement' in English-language publications by the mid-1890s.¹⁴⁹ Another major nomenclatural shift was inspired by events in Ireland. Indian newspapers closely monitored the Irish National Land League's activities against the estate agent Charles Boycott in 1880. Thereafter, the term 'boycott' percolated across Indian broadsheets—first, as isolated local events, like the shunning of European-owned businesses and banks, but building up to wide-scale, coordinated activities by the mid-1890s, such as the decisions of swadeshi associations in Bombay city and Berar to foreswear Manchester goods.¹⁵⁰

What is the significance of the broader arc of swadeshi activity across the nineteenth century—and the common ideas and institutional models which propelled it? First and most obviously, it revises essential notions of the history of swadeshi. A modified timeline of swadeshi must recognize critical developments from as early as the pre-Victorian era. Just as the Gandhian version of swadeshi built upon earlier events, the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal was shaped in important ways by nineteenth-century antecedents. Attempts at industrial revival in the 1800s were not discrete, ephemeral endeavours: rather, we can witness a process whereby the successes and failures of new institutes, industries, ideas, and methods informed and influenced subsequent projects across the length and breadth of the subcontinent, a process aided by vigorous correspondence, newspaper reportage, and the growth of domestic and international travel. As importantly, the three institutional models outlined in this article increasingly fused into a common platform of economic self-reliance by the 1880s and 1890s, providing a sturdy foundation for twentieth-century experiments.

A revised timeline of swadeshi de-centres our focus on Bengal and highlights the diverse progenitors of new forms of economic activity. Amid the flurry of exhibitions and upsurge of associations in the 1870s, we can even identify a 'first' swadeshi movement, one anchored in western India but quickly spreading across the subcontinent.¹⁵¹ Another sustained bout of activity occurred in the 1890s in Punjab, Bengal, and the Bombay presidency until the thunderbolt of the Bengal partition ignited a wider conflagration after 1903. Similarly, it is important to discard notions that swadeshi was ever purely 'indigenous' by acknowledging the significant role of many Europeans throughout the 1850s. This trend persisted in important ways after the Mutiny-Rebellion. At the revived Poona exhibition of 1888, for example, Tilak's associates formed a splendid partnership with Theodore Cooke, the Irish head of the

¹⁴⁸For the Dasara Exhibition, see Janaki Nair, 'Mysore's Wembley? The Dasara Exhibition's imagined economies', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 47, no. 5, 2013, pp. 1549–1587.

¹⁴⁹'Provincial and local', *Tribune*, 15 February 1896, p. 4; 'The Swadeshi Movement', *Tribune*, 30 May 1896, pp. 2–3.

¹⁵⁰See, for example, 'Occasional notes', *Madras Mail*, 29 November 1882; 'Boycotting a bank', *Madras Mail*, 28 April 1884, p. 3; 'An attempt to boycott Manchester', *Tribune*, 22 February 1896, p. 1.

¹⁵¹The terminology of a 'first swadeshi movement' is employed by Yagnik and Sheth, *The shaping of modern Gujarat*, p. 125.

city's Civil Engineering College. And E. B. Havell—who, before taking up the reins at the Calcutta School of Art, presided over the industrial school in Madras which Alexander Hunter had founded in 1850—combined the revival of Indian handicrafts with ideas from the British Arts and Crafts Movement and the credo of self-help.¹⁵² While Indians increasingly turned against foreign goods, they embraced foreign intellectuals, political workers, religious figures, and even a handful of colonial administrators, all of whom enriched swadeshi activism.

Second, a longer history of swadeshi points to vital continuities and discontinuities in Indian economic thought and activity, especially with regard to global ideas, models, and comparisons. Debates over imperial policies, the establishment of new European and American educational institutions, and the organization of international exhibitions left lasting legacies on the scope and tenor of nineteenth-century swadeshi activity. And we can witness their continued relevance in the early twentieth century: for example, the conscious borrowing of foreign models for Indian technical and commercial institutions and the heightened interest in Ireland's Sinn Fein during the Swadeshi Movement.¹⁵³ In the decades before independence, Indian commentators sought out global comparisons with swadeshi in places as diverse as Egypt, China, and the United States. In this sense, bouts of pronounced nativism during the Swadeshi Movement—like Aurobindo Ghose's exhortations against 'foreign habits, foreign dress and manners, [and] foreign education'—can appear as outliers in a story otherwise marked by sustained global links.¹⁵⁴ Even Mohandas K. Gandhi's politics could not effect a complete rupture: professedly swadeshi business in the 1920s and 1930s flourished due to international expertise, foreign technology, and global markets, much to the chagrin of certain nationalist elements.¹⁵⁵ The more that swadeshi changed, the more its global links and orientation stayed the same.

Third, we witness how the *idea* of deindustrialization—an idea rooted in history—exerted a potent influence over attempts at re-industrialization. It is remarkable to observe how a certain historical consciousness lurked in the background of so many of the projects of the nineteenth century, such as the allusions to Maratha power at the Poona exhibitions or Grish Chunder Ghose's assertion that technical education would help India recover its 'rightful position' in the order of great nations. This extended to Britons as well: Josiah Marshall Heath, founder of the Porto Novo Iron Works in the Madras presidency, studied the methods and history of indigenous ironmaking and steelmaking in the 1830s and waxed eloquent about their antiquity and ingenuity.¹⁵⁶ Palpable historical grievances—witness the constant references to India's former manufacturing prowess and its ruin under colonialism—inspired institutions, exhibitions, and associations, and influenced the writings of the Maharashtrian intellectuals of the 1840s, Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bholanath Chandra, and countless

¹⁵²Mitter, *Art and nationalism in colonial India*, Chapters 7, 8.

¹⁵³For example, 'Swadeshi and Sinn Fein', *Irish Times*, 26 July 1907, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴Quoted in Arnold, *Everyday technology*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁵Raianu, *Tata*, Chapter 1; Aashish Velkar, 'Swadeshi capitalism in colonial Bombay', *Historical Journal*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2021, pp. 1009–1034.

¹⁵⁶Josiah Marshall Heath, 'On Indian Iron and Steel; in a Letter Addressed to the Secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland', *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, vol. 11, no. 26, January 1840, pp. 184–191.

others. Narratives of deindustrialization developed in the early nineteenth century continued to power nationalist politics through the early twentieth. But it was left to Gandhi to provide the most unique innovation. Gandhi—who attended the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris but left it profoundly unimpressed—turned one narrative on its head by praising rudimentary technology and elevating the humble charkha to a national symbol. In similar ways, Indians subverted a certain Western disdain for indigenous skills and science by excelling at what David Arnold has called ‘everyday technology’.¹⁵⁷ It was precisely such everyday technology that was on display at Indian industrial exhibitions: improved indigenous looms, candles, ink, firecrackers, traditional medicine, pencils, and matches.

Last, the longer history of swadeshi raises important historiographical questions. It certainly complicates our understandings of Indian nationalism, highlighting deep roots and providing us with a story where, across the great divide of 1857, Indians and Europeans continued to work together on economic and institutional projects fired by certain ideas of national uplift and regeneration. We must recognize that theorists of Indian and non-Western nationalism have dwelled far too much on the role of cultural difference, how nationalist thinkers wrestled with borrowing, challenging, or repudiating Western culture.¹⁵⁸ To a large extent, this is due to methodological choices: the privileging of certain published writings of select intellectuals over sustained archival research, which reveals a far more complex, nuanced picture. Archival sources provide vital connective tissue between intellectual and social histories, removing intellectual history from its lofty heights and putting it in conversation with everyday social developments. The archival record upon which this article relies demonstrates that, aside from weighty ideological debates, nationalism in places like India was also a pragmatic exercise: creating educational infrastructure, new industries, business ventures, societies, and publications. Swadeshi could be representative of this pragmatic, constructive side of nationalism. In the nineteenth century, it helped produce a ‘big tent’ nationalism that did not always see the East and West as sharply divided spheres, but rather as productive ground in which to learn, adapt, and implement new methods and ideas.

Nineteenth-century swadeshi can help us see one final historiographical debate from a new angle: precisely how and when the idea of a national economy emerged in India. Scholars like Manu Goswami are correct to identify the 1870s and 1880s as a pivotal moment in this process, buoyed by the written output of so many Indian economic thinkers. We can, however, observe deeper roots—a trans-subcontinental network of information, ideas, and political activity that recognized a shared economy with common dynamics and pressures. How else can we explain how the petition Calcutta citizens sent to parliament in 1832, complaining of unfair trade policies, excited commentary in Bombay broadsheets? There were important ways in which a ‘colonial state space’ and an emerging ‘national economy’ overlapped with one another.¹⁵⁹ For the Maharashtrian intellectuals of the 1840s, the fiscal strains from imperial warfare

¹⁵⁷ Arnold, *Everyday technology*, pp. 11–13.

¹⁵⁸ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A derivative discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing history from the nation: Questioning narratives of modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁵⁹ Goswami, *Producing India*.

crystalized their visions of a connected Indian economy at the mercy of an extractive colonial state. From the 1840s and 1850s onwards, Indians (and sympathetic Britons) consumed reportage of new mechanical institutes, learned societies, and industrial schools in different parts of the subcontinent and raced to establish their own equivalents. Recognition of a dearth of Indian technical skills and modern manufacturing methods resonated in a wide cross-section of regions and cities. It pushed the maharaja of Jaipur to look to George Buist's industrial school in Bombay in the late 1840s; and it impelled numerous thinkers and writers to study other models of a specifically *national* form of economic regeneration, whether in Ireland or Egypt or Japan.

And herein lies what is perhaps the most significant aspect of the global dimensions of *swadeshi*. It might be more accurate to see the development of a national economic space precisely through Indians' changing relationship with the global economy in the nineteenth century: an upturned world of snapped historic trade links with overseas markets, an inverted dynamic of imports and exports, the erasure of established networks of state patronage, and the decline of formerly glittering hubs of international trade. Many ideas of a national economy seem to have taken root out of these shocks and a collective sense of loss, a reversal of history. This shared, subcontinent-wide experience was a powerful impetus for Indians of various backgrounds to think about the precise mechanics of this economic transformation—and to dream of ways to revive India's industries.

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