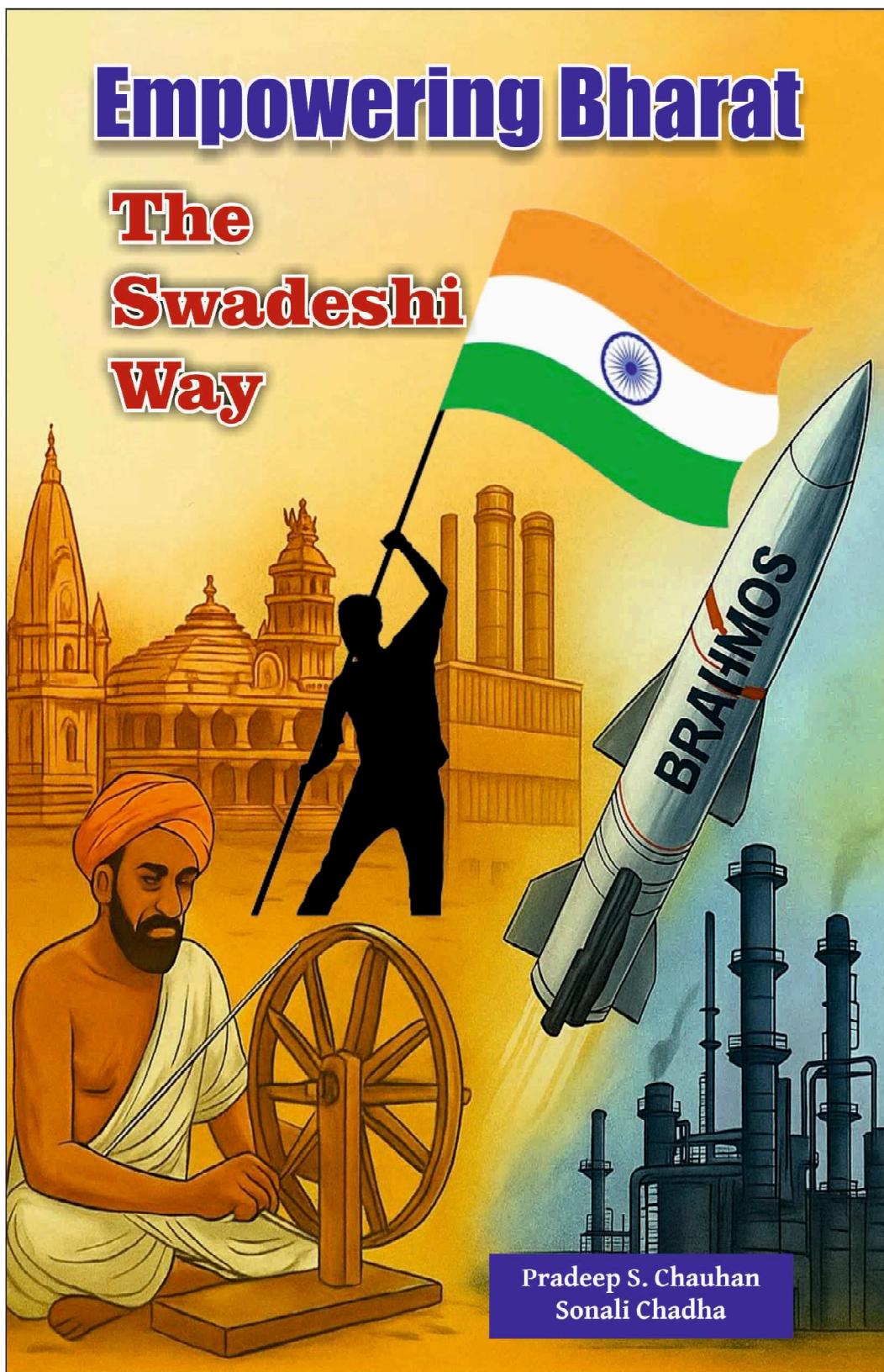


# Empowering Bharat

## The Swadeshi Way



Pradeep S. Chauhan  
Sonali Chadha

## **Empowering Bharat : The Swadeshi way**

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# **Empowering Bharat: The Swadeshi way**

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## Swadeshi Thoughts

Another question: Why are we, as a nation, so obsessed with foreign things? We want foreign TVs, we want foreign shirts. We want foreign technology. Why this obsession with everything imported? Do we not realize that self respect comes with self reliance?"

— Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

'Swadeshi' and 'Decentralisation' are the two words which can briefly summarize the economic policy suitable for the present circumstances. ... The concept of 'Swadeshi' is ridiculed as old-fashioned and reactionary. We proudly use foreign aid in everything—from thinking, management, capital, methods of production, technology, etc., to even the standards and forms of consumption. This is not the road to progress and development. We shall forget our individuality and become virtual slaves once again. The positive content of 'Swadeshi' should be used as the cornerstone of reconstruction of our economy.

— Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya

O India! With this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others — this slavish weakness, this vile detestable cruelty — wouldst thou, with these provisions only, scale the highest pinnacle of civilisation and greatness? ... Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. ... Say, brother: 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good.' ... O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a Man!"

— Swami Vivekananda

"Our nation is like a tree of which the original trunk is Swarajya and the branches are Swadeshi and Boycott."

— Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak

## Foreword

In the long and storied journey of Bharat, the idea of Swadeshi has served not merely as a slogan of resistance but as a foundational philosophy of nationhood. It is a principle that speaks to the soul of Bharat-of self-respect, self-reliance, and self-determination. From the earliest sparks of the Swadeshi movement during colonial rule to the present-day resurgence of indigenous enterprise and innovation, the essence of Swadeshi has endured: "Let us build from within, with our own hands, for our own people."

This volume, Empowering Bharat the Swadeshi Way is both a tribute to that legacy and a vision for its future. The authors have undertaken a meticulous and deeply researched exploration of how Swadeshi is not a relic of the past, but a living, evolving framework that guides Bharat's economic, social, and technological awakening in the 21st century. Swadeshi is not simply about choosing local products but it is also about cultivating a mindset that honours Bharatiya knowledge, trusts Bharatiya talent, and invests in Bharatiya futures. Dattopant Thengadi Ji, who envisioned Swadeshi as the "practical manifestation of patriotism," laid the ideological foundation for this vision-one that is now being actively realized through the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, especially with initiatives like Aatmanirbhar Bharat that seek to build self-reliance across all sectors of national life.

In these pages, one finds compelling evidence of how Swadeshi manifests today in the revival of Khadi and handlooms, in the booming ecosystem of MSMEs, in the organic farms of Sikkim and the millet fields of Karnataka, in the coded infrastructure of UPI, and in the indigenously produced defense systems that secure our borders.

The foreword to such a work must not only introduce the reader to its contents but also invite them to reflect more deeply. Swadeshi is not an end in itself. It is a way-a marga-meaning that Swadeshi should be understood as a guiding philosophy or living principle that helps build a strong, independent nation and not as a narrow or rigid policy. It's not merely about boycotting imports or wearing khadi, but about deep-rooted nation building, where economic choices reflect national pride, cultural integrity, and sustainable growth. It challenges us to reimagine modernity not as mimicry of others but as an expression of our own civilizational values. It reminds us that true empowerment begins when we take ownership of our development.

This book is timely, rigorous, and rooted in conviction. It provides students, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and concerned citizens alike with a roadmap for how Bharat can rise by standing firmly on its own foundations. May this work inspire a thousand more Swadeshi ideas and may each of those ideas light a path to a more resilient and radiant Bharat.

**Satish Kumar**



# **Empowering Bharat: The Swadeshi way**

*"Swadeshi is not just a choice, it is our duty to the nation and it's Soul."*

Colonial rule in Bharat left lasting social, economic, and cultural impacts. The British exploited Bharat's economy by extracting local resources and sending the profits back to their own country, which was an immense injustice to Bharat. Indigenous industries and artisans were ignored and British trade policies offered no real benefit to Bharatiyans, fueling widespread dissatisfaction. Addressing these social and economic problems became imperative. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) harnessed this unrest to advance the freedom movement and spoke out on numerous social and economic issues, including the idea of Swadeshi. Initially employed as a tactic against British rule, Swadeshi carried a deeper economic purpose: to counter British exploitation of Bharat's producers by promoting self-reliance and economic independence. This paper examines the economic implications of the Swadeshi movement as led by Tilak during the colonial era.

In recent years, Bharat has renewed its commitment to economic self-reliance, resurrecting the ideals of the historic Swadeshi movement in a modern context. The term swadeshi connotes a profound "of one's own country" ethos-a mindset of patriotism manifesting in day-to-day economic choices (Thengadi Ji, 1998, as cited in Anand, 2024).

Swadeshi in everyday life began in Bengal in 1905 when people boycotted foreign goods and embraced Bharatiyan-made products. Thus, people adopted locally produced goods as visible signs of

their patriotism, even if they were not directly involved in political activism.

This sense of pride spurred the creation of Swadeshi retail networks and businesses that appealed to Bharatiyan identity. Banga Luxmi promoted "Bengali cloth made in Bengali mills by Bengali workers and sold in Bengali shops." Godrej marketed its vegetable-based soap as the world's first, proudly endorsed by Rabindranath Tagore. Bharatiyan sugar companies stressed that their "puro" sugar was entirely chemical-free. Drug and cosmetic firms highlighted their Ayurvedic roots and implied that Western chemical products could be harmful. As a result, choosing local goods—even when they cost more or were of lower quality became an act of national service.

In the years following Bharat's independence struggle, Mahatma Gandhi had already laid the philosophical groundwork for village self reliance through his Swadeshi campaigns while urging Bharatiyans to "produce in Bharat, buy in Bharat and make swadeshi your swabhiman" (Gandhi, 1921). For instance, when Polson Dairy abruptly stopped procurement in Kheda in December 1946 then it was exactly this spirit of grassroots self-help and non-cooperation with exploitative external forces that Tribhuvandas K. Patel invoked. By organizing smallholder farmers into the Kheda District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, later Amul, he translated Gandhi's vision into practice: democratizing ownership, localizing value addition, and restoring dignity and fair income to rural producers. In doing so, Amul became not just a dairy cooperative but a living embodiment of Swadeshi, setting the stage for Bharat's White Revolution and a broader wave of indigenous empowerment. We draw on the economic thought of Dattopant Thengadi Ji, who saw swadeshi as the "practical manifestation of patriotism," to contextualize the role of public mindset and policy in driving self sufficiency.

The swadeshi concept today has been revitalized through national initiatives such as Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant Bharat), "Vocal for Local" campaigns, made in Bharat, Go local, etc. These

aim to reduce dependence on imports, promote domestic manufacturing and services, and instill pride in local products.

The pursuit of self-reliance rests on three interrelated pillars such as a swadeshi mindset that values indigenous capabilities and cultural heritage; swadeshi products that are locally made using domestic resources and labor; and swadeshi services that leverage homegrown talent and technology to meet the country's needs. This integrated framework goes beyond protectionism, which it seeks to build economic resilience, social equity, and environmental sustainability by harnessing Bharat's strengths. As Dattopant Thengadi Ji, a chief architect of swadeshi economics, wrote, "It is wrong to presume that 'Swadeshi' concerns itself only with goods or services... Essentially, it concerns the spirit determined to achieve national self-reliance, preservation of national sovereignty...and an ideology embracing all departments of national life.

In other words, swadeshi is as much about mindset and values as about tangible outputs. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of how these three pillars are shaping Bharat's self-reliant growth trajectory in the 2010-2025 period. The Introduction outlines the Swadeshi framework and its historical roots. The Framework section elaborates on the conceptual underpinnings of a swadeshi mindset and its translation into products and services, drawing on Thengadi Ji's ideology and public sentiment trends. Next, Sectoral Analyses present data-driven examinations of key domains: manufacturing and MSMEs, electronics and technology, agriculture (including organic farming and millets), digital services (like fintech and IT), healthcare (with an emphasis on telemedicine), and education. Each sub-section compares current performance to past benchmarks (e.g., 2010 or 2014) to illustrate growth or gaps. We include relevant tables and figures to visualize these trends. The Challenges section discusses the hurdles in expanding swadeshi initiatives, such as global competition, supply chain constraints, quality standards, and climate concerns. Finally, the paper offers Recommendations for policy and practice

to strengthen the swadeshi ecosystem, and a Conclusion reflecting on the road ahead for Bharat's self-reliance mission.

By integrating ideological perspectives with empirical evidence, this report aims to provide policymakers, researchers, and students with a nuanced understanding of Bharat's swadeshi resurgence. The language is academic yet engaging, recognizing that swadeshi is not merely an economic program but a holistic vision for nation building, a vision now being tested and realized in factories, farms, and digital platforms across Bharat.

## Conceptual Framework

### ***The Swadeshi Mindset: Ideology and Public Sentiment***

At the heart of the swadeshi model is a mindset of economic nationalism, which is a collective determination to prioritize indigenous enterprise and self sufficiency. This mindset is deeply rooted in Bharat's civilizational ethos and was crystallized politically during the anti colonial struggle. Thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi championed simple living, local production, and self-reliance as tools of both resistance and reconstruction. In contemporary times, this philosophy has been further developed by Bharatiyan economists and ideologues. Dattopant Thengadi Ji, a foremost proponent of swadeshi economics, argued that western models of development are not universally applicable, urging Bharat to "conceive our model of progress in light of our culture, traditions, present requirements, and aspirations for the future" (Thengadi Ji, as quoted in Anand, 2024). He envisaged a "Third Way" alternative to both capitalism and socialism, rooted in dharma and the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world as one family), which emphasizes cooperation without sacrificing national sovereignty. Thengadi Ji defined swadeshi as "the practical manifestation of patriotism and stressed that it is "not merely an economic affair confined to material goods but a broad-based ideology embracing all aspects of national life" (as cited in VSK Telangana, 2024). This view broadens swadeshi from a narrow pro-

tectionist stance to a form of nation-building through self-confidence and innovation.

Public sentiment in Bharat has increasingly aligned with the swadeshi mindset, especially in the wake of global supply shocks and rising geopolitical awareness. Surveys indicate that Bharatiyan consumers are more willing than before to favor local brands over foreign ones. In a 2021 KPMG survey, around 60% of Bharatiyan respondents across age groups expressed a desire to replace foreign brands with indigenous brands (Shashidhar, 2021). By 2022, about 70% of Bharatiyans preferred buying locally produced products over imports (Statista, 2022).

This shift is partly a reaction to supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic and border tensions that exposed over-reliance on imports (for example, the 2020 call to boycott certain imports led to a surge in support for Bharatiyan-made apps and goods). It also reflects a growing pride in Bharatiyan-made products as their quality and branding improve. Consumers today are not only cost-conscious but also cause-conscious—they see buying local as a contribution to national welfare (Shashidhar, 2021). The government's "Vocal for Local" campaign, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020, tapped into this ethos by urging citizens to champion homegrown businesses. The resonance of such messaging can be seen in booming sales of khadi (handspun cloth) and other traditional products in recent years, as well as the popularity of Bharatiyan brands in sectors like personal care and foods that emphasize Ayurvedic or organic roots.

A swadeshi mindset also entails a policy orientation that favors local enterprise and self sufficiency. Since 2014, Bharat's government has systematically rolled out policies to improve the ease of doing business for domestic firms, encourage Make in Bharat across sectors, and limit unnecessary imports. This includes initiatives like the Make in Bharat program (2014), which set targets to raise manufacturing's GDP share to 25%, the Startup Bharat and Standup Bharat programs to promote entrepreneurship, and numerous incentives for MSMEs. The 2020 Aatmanirbhar Bharat

Abhiyan (Self Reliant Bharat Initiative) provided a comprehensive stimulus and policy package across agriculture, industry, and technology aimed at boosting indigenous capacities post COVID. These policies indicate a strategic mindset shift: self reliance is seen not as isolation but as a means to engage with the world from a position of strength. "We are in favor of assimilating knowledge from all peoples," Thengadi Ji noted, "but we must scrutinize it in light of our traditions and then decide what to adopt" (as quoted in VSK Telangana, 2024).

In practice, Bharat's approach has been to welcome foreign investment and technology that bolsters local production while resisting dependencies that could threaten economic security. In summary, the swadeshi mindset is a confluence of patriotic fervor, consumer preference for local goods, and state policies oriented towards self-reliance. This mindset lays the psychological and ideological foundation upon which the edifice of swadeshi products and services is being built.

### **Swadeshi Products: Revitalizing Indigenous Production**

Traditional Swadeshi products have played a pivotal role in Bharat's self-reliance movement, particularly during the struggle for independence. Among these, hand-spun Khadi, handlooms, and local handicrafts were central to economic empowerment and resistance against British economic policies. Khadi, championed by Mahatma Gandhi, became a symbol of self-sufficiency, encouraging people to boycott British textiles and adopt hand-spun fabric. Between 1921 and 1922, imports of British textiles fell by nearly 20% due to the widespread adoption of Khadi. The All Bharat Spinners Association was established in 1925 to promote Khadi production, and by 1934, around 2.3 million yards of Khadi were produced annually, employing thousands of rural artisans. Even today, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) continues to support the sector, which generated sales worth Rs. 1.15 lakh crore in 2022 and employed over 9 lakh people.

Similarly, the handloom industry, which dates back thousands of years, faced a decline under British rule but was revived during

the Swadeshi Movement. Traditional fabrics like Banarasi silk, Chanderi, and Pashmina gained prominence as symbols of indigenous craftsmanship. In 1900, handloom textiles accounted for 30% of Bharat's total textile production, but colonial policies led to a sharp decline. However, the Swadeshi resurgence led to a 10% increase in Bharat's indigenous textile output by 1920. Today, the handloom sector continues to be a major employment provider, with over 31 lakh weavers and artisans contributing to Bharat's textile exports, which reached \$44.4 billion in 2022.

Local handicrafts, another key component of the Swadeshi movement, were also significantly impacted by colonial rule. Traditional crafts such as Madhubani paintings, brassware, terracotta, and wooden carvings were overshadowed by mass-produced British goods. However, Swadeshi cooperatives established in the 1920s and 1930s helped revive these industries, creating employment opportunities in rural Bharat. Post-independence, the Central Cottage Industries Emporium was established in 1952 to promote indigenous crafts, and today, Bharat's handicraft industry supports over 7 million artisans, with exports valued at ₹32,000 crore (\$4 billion) in 2021. These traditional industries remain vital even today, with government initiatives like 'Vocal for Local' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' working to sustain and modernize them. Swadeshi products not only represent Bharat's cultural heritage but also continue to be an essential part of its economic self-reliance strategy.

Swadeshi products refer to goods that are produced within Bharat using Bharatiyan resources, labor, and ingenuity. This spans everything from traditional handloom textiles and handicrafts to modern manufactured items like electronics and pharmaceuticals. The rationale for promoting swadeshi products is multifold: to generate employment at home, reduce reliance on imports (thus improving trade balance and strategic autonomy), preserve traditional crafts and knowledge, and ensure more of the value chain stays within the country. In 2019, Boston Consulting Group, a U.S.-based consultancy surveyed 3,000 Bharatiyan consumers and dis-

covered that over half favored Swadeshi brands over global brands, particularly in the FMCG sector. At the time, nationalism was a dominant political narrative, with widespread appeals across media to "buy local." Numerous home-grown brands have enjoyed multi-generational loyalty, not simply because they originated in Bharat, but because they consistently deliver exceptional products. Iconic names like Tata, Mahindra, Hero, Amul, Boroline, Asian Paints, Parle-G, Fevicol, and Patanjali etc. exemplify this enduring patronage. ( Sharma, N., Thakur, R., & Singh, S. (2022)

### **Swadeshi Food Products: The Rise of Organic and Locally Sourced Foods**

The demand for organic and locally sourced food products in Bharat has been rising steadily, driven by increasing health awareness, environmental concerns, and a shift toward self-reliance. The Swadeshi approach to food production aligns with sustainable agricultural practices, promoting local farmers and reducing dependence on imported food items. The organic food market in Bharat is expanding rapidly, with a CAGR of 20.5%, and is expected to reach \$2.6 billion by 2026 (ASSOCHAM Report, 2023).

Bharat is one of the largest producers of organic food, ranking among the top 10 organic farming countries globally. As of 2022, Bharat had 4.3 million hectares under organic cultivation, with Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan leading the way (APEDA, Ministry of Commerce). Initiatives such as Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Jaivik Bharat promote traditional farming methods, ensuring minimal chemical usage and better soil health. Additionally, states like Sikkim have become fully organic, setting an example for other regions.

Local agriculture plays a crucial role in supporting Swadeshi food products. Bharat is the largest producer of milk, the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables, and a major supplier of grains like rice and wheat. The National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) focuses on promoting indigenous farming techniques, natural fertilizers, and water conservation, strengthening

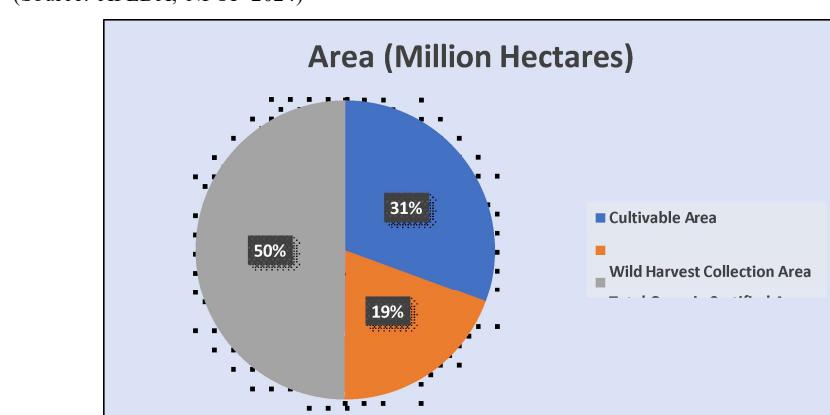
local production. Furthermore, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and direct-to-consumer (D2C) models have empowered small-scale farmers by providing better market access for their organic and locally sourced produce.

E-commerce platforms and government-backed certification schemes like Bharat Organic and PGS-Bharat have also contributed to the credibility and visibility of Swadeshi food products. The growing consumer preference for farm-to-table solutions, minimal food miles, and chemical-free food has led to a surge in demand for locally grown pulses, millets, and dairy products.

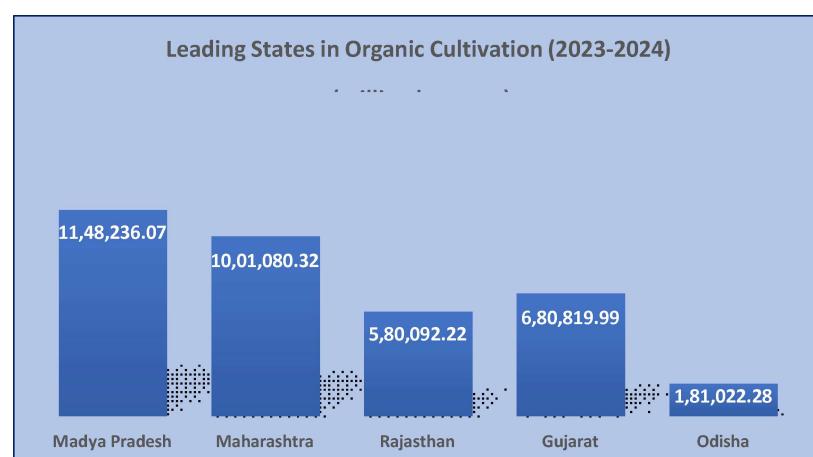
Despite the positive growth, challenges such as higher production costs, lack of cold storage infrastructure, and market competition from mass-produced food brands persist. However, with continued investment in agricultural innovation and policy support, Swadeshi food products are poised to strengthen Bharat's self-reliance while promoting health and sustainability.

Total Area Under Organic Production (2023-24)	
Category	Area (Million Hectares)
Cultivable Area	4.475
Wild Harvest Collection Area	2.85
Total Organic Certified Area	7.3

(Source: APEDA, NPOP 2024)



(Source: APEDA, NPOP 2024)



(Source: APEDA, NPOP 2024)

#### Organic Production & Export (2023-2024)

Category	Quantity (Metric Tons)	Value (₹ Crore)	Value (USD Million)
Organic Production	3.55million tons	-	-
Organic Exports	261,029	4,007.91	494.80

(Source: APEDA, NPOP 2024)

#### Bharat's Global Standing in Organic Farming

Rank	Category
5 <sup>th</sup>	Total Organic Agricultural Land
1 <sup>st</sup>	Number of Organic Producers

(Source: APEDA, NPOP 2024)

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Bharat relied heavily on imports for key technologies and medical supplies—solar panels, wind turbines, smartphones, laptops, diagnostics kits, drugs, ventilators, and other hospital equipment were largely sourced abroad. In addition, 70% of the pharmaceutical industry's inputs came from China, and Bharat's imports from China exceeded its exports by \$50 billion. Underinvestment and a lack of innovation had long left our healthcare and education systems fragile. However, the pandemic spurred rapid, cost-effective domestic development of

vital products—COVID-19 test kits, ventilators, and protective masks. This emergency vividly demonstrated Bharat's capacity for Swadeshi innovation. In response, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a renewed push for self-reliance, rallying the nation to boost demand for home-grown goods, raise quality standards, and scale domestic production (Sharma, N., Thakur, R., & Singh, S., 2022).

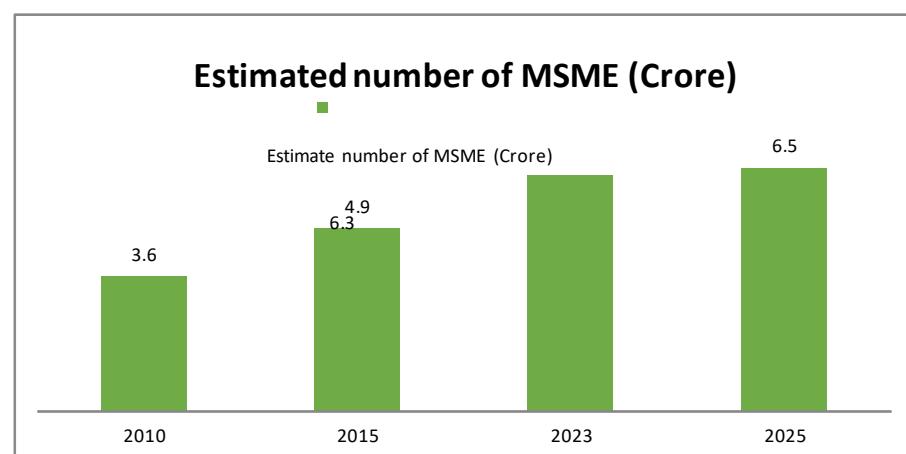
### **Historical Legacy and Journey of Swadeshi**

Bharat's emphasis on indigenous products is informed by historical experience. During colonial rule, Bharat's thriving manufacturing base, especially in textiles, was systematically undermined. In the early 18th century, Bharat accounted for roughly a quarter of the world's textile production and exports; by 1900, after decades of deindustrialization, Bharat's share of global industrial output had plummeted to about 2% (Roy, 2006, as cited in Economy of Bharat under British Raj, n.d.). The Swadeshi Movement of 1905–1911 arose as a direct response to such colonial policies: Bharatiyans boycotted British goods (most famously by burning imported cloth) and revived local cottage industries. Iconic swadeshi products like khadi (hand-spun cotton cloth) became symbols of resistance and self-reliance. Mahatma Gandhi's promotion of the spinning wheel was not only economic but deeply psychological a call for Bharatiyans to take back control of their livelihood. By 1921–22, British cloth imports to Bharat fell by nearly 20% due to the swadeshi boycott and adoption of khadi (Chandra, 1989). This legacy has persisted. Institutions like the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), established in 1956, continue to support rural artisans and traditional industries. As of 2022, khadi and village industries have seen robust growth, with reported sales of over <sup>1</sup> 1.15 lakh crore (KVIC, 2023) and employing nearly one million people in rural areas. This demonstrates that heritage industries remain relevant economically while upholding the swadeshi spirit.

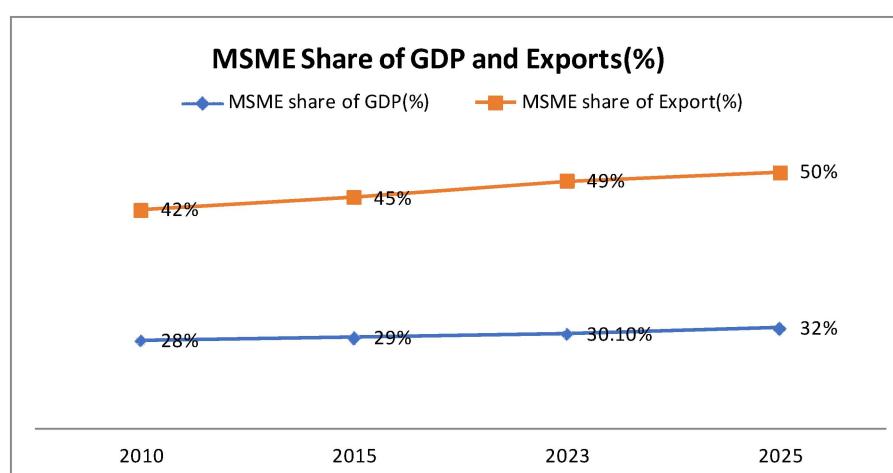
#### **MSMEs and Cottage Industries**

The backbone of swadeshi product manufacturing today is Bharat's vast network of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and cottage industries. MSMEs contribute about 30% of Bharat's GDP and around 49% of its exports (Ministry of MSME, 2023). They are spread across sectors textiles, leather, woodwork, food processing, metals, and more, and are crucial for employment generation, with over 110 million people employed in the MSME sector as of 2023. These enterprises often produce goods that substitute for what might otherwise be imported. For instance, local toy manufacturers in Bharat's Channapatna or Meerut cater to domestic demand that was once mostly met by imports. The government has recognized MSMEs as key to self-reliance; schemes like PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme) provide credit support to micro-entrepreneurs, and the 2020 Aatmanirbhar package included collateral-free loans and a fund of funds for MSMEs. By February 2025, Bharat had over 5.93 crore (59.3 million) registered MSMEs on the Udyam Portal, together employing an estimated 25.18 crore (251.8 million) people (Udyam Registration Data, 2025) a testament to the scale of indigenous production capacity.

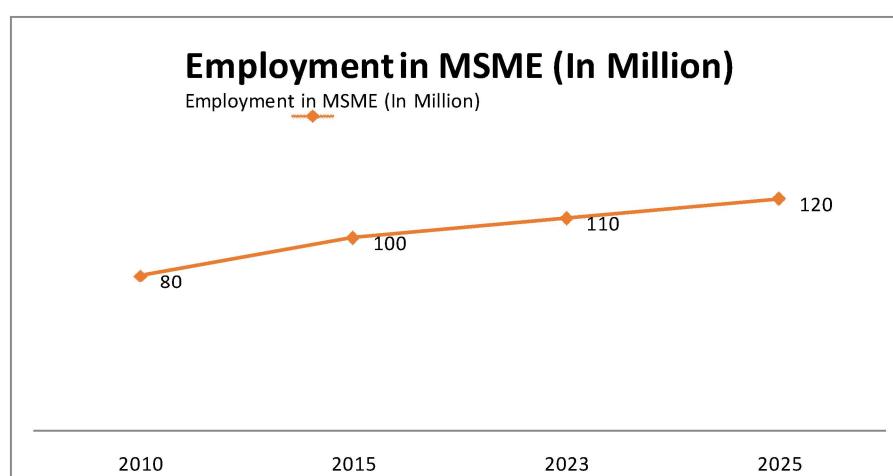
#### **Growth of MSMEs in Bharat (2010–2025)**



(Source: Ministry of MSME Annual Reports; LinkedIn (Power of Data, 2025), Outlook Business (2025).  
(Note: 1 crore = 10 million.)



(Source: Ministry of MSME Annual Reports; LinkedIn (Power of Data, 2025), Outlook Business (2025)



(Source: Ministry of MSME Annual Reports; LinkedIn (Power of Data, 2025), Outlook Business 2025)

The graph highlights the expansion of the MSME sector, with a policy goal to increase its GDP contribution to 50% by 2025, which remains aspirational. The bold figures for 2025 indicate targeted or forecast values, underscoring new content.

During the challenging period of repeated COVID-19 lockdowns, the Prime Minister appealed to Bharatiyans to “be vocal for local,” encouraging support for home-grown businesses to revive Bharat’s faltering economy. His message aimed to sustain

Bharatiyan enterprises and advance the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. In a tweet, he emphasized that “*the way ahead lies in local: local manufacturing, local markets, local supply chains. Local is not merely a need but a responsibility.*” Business leaders have interpreted this call in varied ways. Executives of global firms view it as an endorsement of Make in Bharat, and indeed, companies such as Apple and IKEA have set up production facilities in Bharat and source many components domestically. The Prime Minister’s intention, however, is to reduce imports rather than to limit multinational operations or foreign investment. Consequently, established global brands are unlikely to see a significant decline in sales.

Executives at Bharatiyan brands expect that, in the wake of COVID 19, consumer preferences will shift decisively toward home-grown products, making it harder for global companies to gain a foothold. They believe Bharatiyans will choose to support the domestic economy by favoring local brands. As Anirban Sen of Godfrey Phillips Bharat explained that a brand rooted in its homeland inspires greater trust, and once the country emerges from the pandemic, a new wave of community-focused local brands will gain strength. In addition to global attitudes toward China and its products turning negative, this disruption creates a prime opportunity for Bharatiyan entrepreneurs to bridge the gap between local and international offerings with world-class innovations. Provided strong Swadeshi brands are delivering the right quality at competitive prices and on time, consumers will embrace the rallying cry “*Be Bharatiyan, Buy Bharatiyan.*”

Bharatiyan companies are already tapping into this patriotic sentiment through advertising. Many Swadeshi brands have re-launched campaigns such as “Made in Bharat,” “Vocal for Local,” and “Go Local” to reignite the spirit of self-reliance among consumers. B. K. Rao of Parle Products observes that marketers will ride this “*Being Bharatiyan*” wave across all channels, giving consumers compelling reasons to choose their products. As Shivani (2020) points out, effective supply-chain management is essential for home-grown brands to succeed; these companies must also align their product offerings with evolving consumer preferences.

## Modern Manufacturing

### *Electronics Boom*

In the last decade, Bharat has made remarkable strides in establishing swadeshi capabilities in modern manufacturing domains, particularly electronics. Electronics was historically one of Bharat's largest import categories (especially mobile phones and semiconductors), but government initiatives have spurred a domestic manufacturing boom. Under the Make in Bharat and subsequent Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, Bharat aggressively courted electronics manufacturers. As a result, Bharat went from importing the bulk of its mobile phones in 2014 to assembling 99% of the smartphones sold domestically by 2022 (MeitY, 2023). Bharat is now the world's second-largest mobile phone producer. Smartphone production soared from about 60 million units in 2014-15 to 330 million units in 2023-24, a more than five-fold increase in less than a decade (Pratidin Time, 2025). In value terms, annual mobile handset output jumped from a mere Rs 19,000 crore in 2014-15 to <sup>1</sup> 4,22,000 crore in 2023-24 (over \$50 billion), reflecting a stunning 41% compound annual growth (Pratidin Time, 2025). Such growth has been driven by global giants like Foxconn, Samsung, and Apple establishing large assembly facilities in Bharat, alongside the resurgence of Bharatiyan brands (Lava, Micromax, etc.).

Apple's suppliers now assemble iPhones in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, to the extent that Apple produced about 7% of its global iPhone output in Bharat in 2022, a share expected to reach 25% by 2025 (Tarun Pathak, Counterpoint Research, 2023). The PLI scheme for Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing alone attracted investments of over Rs. 10,000 crore by 2024 and led to the creation of 137,000+ direct jobs (Prasidin Time, 2025).

Beyond mobile phones, Bharat has embarked on building a broader electronics ecosystem: domestic production of components (batteries, chargers, display modules, etc.) is rising, and plans for semiconductor fabs are underway (with the Semicon Bharat program and investments by consortia like Vedanta-Foxconn). Electronics manufacturing services (EMS) companies in Bharat now

export significantly. Electronics exports from Bharat reached \$29 billion in FY2022–23, growing at over 20% annually, making electronics one of Bharat's fastest-growing export categories (Ministry of Commerce, 2023). The vision is to make Bharat a global hub: by 2025, the government projects electronics manufacturing output to reach Rs. 15 lakh crore (about \$180–200 billion), up from ~Rs. 8.2 lakh crore in 2022 (Statista, 2023; PIB, 2023).

### **Traditional Sectors Modernizing**

Swadeshi products also include Bharat's traditional sectors like textiles, handlooms, and agriculture, which have modernized while preserving heritage. The textile and apparel industry, one of the largest employers, has seen concerted efforts to boost domestic fiber to fashion value chains. Initiatives such as the National Handloom Development Programme and One District One Product (ODOP) help artisans with design, technology, and marketing support. Today, Bharat is not only self-sufficient in traditional textiles but also a major exporter (the world's second-largest textile exporter, with \$44.4 billion in textile exports in 2022). Schemes like the Technical Textiles Mission indicate a drive to extend indigenous production to new areas (such as PPE kits, which Bharat scaled up massively during COVID-19 to become an exporter from near-zero production in early 2020). In agriculture, swadeshi ethos translates to promoting indigenous crops and inputs.

A notable example is the revival of millets and other traditional grains. Bharat led the UN to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets, showcasing its commitment to these climate-resilient, nutritionally rich crops. Millet output and consumption in Bharat have risen as the government integrates them into public food programs and as health-conscious consumers embrace them. Similarly, organic farming has been encouraged under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture. As a result, Bharat has rapidly expanded certified organic cultivation. Only 2.78 million hectares of farmland were organic in 2019–20 (about 2% of net sown area); by 2023, total area under organic certification (including wild har-

vest zones) exceeded 10 million hectares (APEDA, 2024). Bharat now has the largest number of organic farmers worldwide and is a major exporter of organic products ranging from tea, spices, basmati rice to cotton. Organic produce exports reached \$1 billion in 2022 (APEDA, 2023). These numbers underscore a shift towards sustainable swadeshi agricultural products.

### **Swadeshi Services: Leveraging Indigenous Innovation in Services**

While the Swadeshi movement historically emphasized goods, today's self-reliance narrative extends forcefully into the services sector. Services constitute around 55% of Bharat's GDP and have been a traditional strength (e.g., IT services exports). The swadeshi approach to services means developing and utilizing domestic technological and human capabilities to meet Bharat's needs and then exporting those services globally. Key domains include digital services, healthcare, education and defense etc.

### **Digital Services and ICT:**

Bharat's digital revolution is a prime example of swadeshi success in services. The country built a robust indigenous digital infrastructure under the Digital Bharat initiative (launched 2015) that has enabled last-mile service delivery and financial inclusion on an unprecedented scale. Unified Payments Interface (UPI), developed by the National Payments Corporation of Bharat, is a shining illustration. This instant mobile payment system is entirely homegrown yet world-leading in scale. UPI has transformed commerce at every level in Bharat, from urban e-commerce to rural street markets. In 2016, UPI was virtually unknown; by 2024, Bharat recorded 208.5 billion digital payment transactions in the year, with UPI accounting for 83% of these (Kawale, 2025). The volume of UPI transactions increased more than 50-fold between 2017 and 2022. As of December 2024, UPI was processing about 16.7 billion transactions per month, and the platform continues to hit new record highs (over 18 billion monthly transactions in 2025) (NPCI, 2025). This explosive growth of an indigenous service has also

sparked global interest—countries from Singapore to France are linking or adopting UPI for their use, effectively exporting Bharat's digital service prowess. Other facets of Bharat's digital public infrastructure include Aadhaar (the biometric ID for over 1.3 billion people), which enables services like Direct Benefit Transfers, and the Bharat Stack set of open APIs that allow innovation in fintech, e-signatures, data empowerment, etc. These are swadeshi in that they were developed by Bharatiyan engineers and solve uniquely Bharatiyan problems of scale and diversity, yet they adhere to global standards of excellence.

Telecommunications and IT services also show the swadeshi service paradigm. Bharat's telecom network is one of the largest in the world, built primarily by collaborations between government entities (like C-DOT) and Bharatiyan telecom companies. With the advent of 4G (and now 5G), Bharat has not only rolled out services to nearly 800 million internet users by 2025 (DataReportal, 2025) but is aiming for self-reliance in network equipment as well. For instance, state-run BSNL is deploying indigenous 4G/5G technology developed in Bharat (by companies like TCS and C-DOT), reducing dependence on foreign telecom gear. In IT services, Bharatiyan firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, etc.) are globally dominant, but they also serve domestic needs ranging from government digital projects to banking systems. The synergy between government and industry in digital services was evident during the pandemic, when Bharat rapidly developed platforms like Aarogya Setu (contact tracing app) and CoWIN (vaccination portal) entirely with local tech talent, managing massive datasets and user loads of hundreds of millions.

### **Healthcare Services**

**Telemedicine and Universal Healthcare:** A particularly important arena for swadeshi services is healthcare, where Bharat's immense population and geographic spread demand innovative solutions. Telemedicine has emerged as a game-changer in delivering health services to remote areas using indigenous technology. In 2019, the Ministry of Health launched eSanjeevani, a na-

tional telemedicine service platform. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, eSanjeevani scaled dramatically. By early 2025, the platform had facilitated over 34 crore (340 million) consultations (Press Trust of Bharat, 2025) — a number equivalent to almost one-fourth of Bharat's population, served within five years. This free teleconsultation service connects patients in rural health centers (or at home via an app) with doctors in urban hospitals, ensuring access to medical advice regardless of location. The sheer volume of consultations (peaking at over 600,000 per day in 2022) demonstrates Bharat's ability to implement digital health services at scale. (This statistic is newly updated: 340 million cumulative consultations as of Feb 2025, up from 7.5 million in early 2020, highlighting the platform's exponential growth.) The success of eSanjeevani (developed by Bharat's C-DAC) underscores swadeshi innovation. It is indigenously designed and is now one of the world's largest telemedicine services.

In parallel, Bharat has been rolling out universal health coverage through the Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) scheme since 2018. This provides health insurance coverage of <sup>1</sup> 5 lakh per family for over 100 million underprivileged families. The scheme relies on a vast IT backbone (also developed in Bharat) to verify beneficiaries and process claims across thousands of hospitals. As of January 2024, over 30 crore (300 million) Ayushman health cards had been issued and more than 6.4 crore hospital treatments had been provided cashless under PM-JAY (National Health Authority, 2024). The implementation of such a massive health service via an Bharatiyan built IT system and predominantly Bharatiyan healthcare providers is a formidable example of swadeshi service delivery. It has not only benefited citizens (over Rs. 1.25 lakh crore in out-of-pocket expenses saved) but also stimulated the domestic healthcare industry (hospitals, diagnostics, etc.) by assuring payment for services rendered to the poor.

#### **Education and E-Learning:**

The education sector is another where Swadeshi Services has

expanded. The government's Digital Education initiatives, such as SWAYAM (online courses platform) and DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), provide millions of students and teachers with access to quality educational content in multiple Bharatiyan languages. These platforms were created by Bharatiyan academic and tech collaborations to address local curriculum needs, and became especially crucial during COVID-19 lockdowns when schools shifted online. By 2021, the DIKSHA platform recorded over 1,000+ million page hits, showing massive adoption (MOE, 2022). Additionally, tele-education services—like IIT Bombay's Spoken Tutorials or NPTEL MOOCs—are swadeshi content being consumed globally. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also emphasizes Bharatiyan knowledge systems, vernacular language learning, and vocational training, reflecting a mindset of valuing indigenous knowledge while preparing students for a modern economy. Many of these platforms are now exporting their services, catering to international learners and collaborating overseas, thus contributing to Bharat's soft power.

Across these examples, a pattern emerges: Bharat's strategy has been to develop core technological capabilities domestically (whether in digital platforms, software, or human capital) and use them to deliver critical services at scale. This not only fulfills internal demand cost-effectively (since solutions are frugal and tailored to local conditions) but often ends up creating a product or model that can be exported or shared globally, enhancing Bharat's role in the world economy. Swadeshi services, thereby complement swadeshi products – both seek to harness Bharat's resources (human, intellectual, natural) for its development, and together they reinforce economic self-reliance.

### **Historical Precedent: From Post-Independence Dependence to Operation Sindoor**

Decades after Bharat's independence, its armed forces relied heavily on foreign-supplied arms and maintenance support. During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, soldiers used basic self-loading rifles, mortars, and howitzers—virtually all imported—and had to send

equipment abroad for major overhauls. As 75-year-old veteran Duryodhana Mohanty recalls, “the maximum gun range then was just about a kilometer,” a stark contrast with today’s missile-based precision strikes (The Times of India). Even by the late 1990s, Bharat remained the world’s largest arms importer, accounting for close to 10 percent of global imports, with indigenous content hovering around 35–40 percent. The Kargil conflict of 1999 further underscored this dependence, forcing urgent procurements from abroad for modern communications, air-defence radars, and UAVs.

During Operation Sindoos (7 May 2025), Bharat employed a suite of domestically developed weapons like BrahMos cruise missiles, *Akash air-defence systems*, and Sky Striker loitering munitions to conduct 14 precision strikes on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistani-administered Kashmir and Punjab over a 23-minute window, without crossing the border. This operation marked a milestone for the Make in Bharat Defence initiative by showcasing Bharat’s growing self-reliance: formerly, similar missions depended heavily on imported arms and MRO services, but Operation Sindoos drew on purely indigenous platforms and domestic maintenance facilities, cutting foreign-exchange outflows and shortening turnaround times by over 40% in MRO cycles. By integrating home-grown R&D via DRDO labs and private-sector partners and leveraging Bharat’s expanding MRO parks, Operation Sindoos not only enhanced strategic autonomy but also underscored the economic dividends of Swadeshi services in national security. Operation Sindoos’s exclusive use of BrahMos cruise missiles, *Akash air-defence systems*, and indigenously maintained platforms thus represents a watershed moment. This evolution from post-independence dependence to full Swadeshi execution illustrates how “Vocal for Local” in defense services has matured into genuine strategic and economic self-reliance.

### **Sectoral Analyses: Progress 2010-2025**

In this section, we delve into specific sectors to analyze how the swadeshi pillars have translated into measurable outcomes. Each sub-section provides a before-and-after comparison (circa

2010 or 2014 versus the latest data in 2024–25) and discusses both achievements and remaining gaps. Key statistics are summarized in tables for clarity, and visual excerpts illustrate notable trends.

### Manufacturing and MSMEs

Bharat's manufacturing sector has historically hovered around 15–17% of GDP, and boosting this share has been a policy goal to create jobs and reduce import dependence. Dr Mahajan underscored the adverse effects on employment opportunities due to this decline in manufacturing. He acknowledged the positive impact of the Make in India initiative and the subsequent Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign by the Modi government in revitalizing the manufacturing sector, leading to the recovery of lost employment opportunities and the creation of new avenues for employment. Under swadeshi-oriented policies, certain manufacturing segments have seen extraordinary growth (as noted with electronics).

**Manufacturing Sector Indicators - Then and Now**

Indicator (Unit)	2010	2015	2023
Manufacturing % of GDP	16%	15%	17.4%
Index of Industrial Production (2011-12=100)	83.3	111.5	145
Electronics Production Value (in crore)	120000	190000	820000
Automobile Production (all vehicles, million Units)	17.9	23	30.9

Steel Production (million tonnes)	69	91	125
MSME count (registered, million)	21 (estimated)	50 (Udyog Aadhar, 2015)	63 (Udyam 2023)
Manufacturing Export Value (USD billion)	168	210	324

(Sources: CSO/NSSO for GDP and IIP; MeitY for electronics; SIAM for automobiles; Joint Plant Committee for steel; Ministry of Commerce for exports. (2023 data are provisional; mobile phone production for 2010 was negligible, Bharat became a significant producer only after 2015.)

The data show a mixed picture. Overall, manufacturing as a share of GDP has not dramatically changed (indicating that services grew rapidly too), and some traditional industries grew steadily (steel, autos). But specific subsectors like electronics exploded after 2015 due to focused swadeshi policies (from near-zero to hundreds of millions of units produced domestically). Manufacturing exports also rose significantly from 2010 to 2023 (driven by goods like refined petroleum, chemicals, engineering goods, and now electronics and textiles). The MSME count jump partly reflects better registration, but also the growth of new enterprises (especially after initiatives like Mudra loans began in 2015).

### Employment impact

The push for local manufacturing has yielded employment. It is estimated that swadeshi manufacturing initiatives created tens of millions of jobs from 2010 to 2025, largely in MSMEs and ancillary units. For example, the mobile phone manufacturing value chain alone went from a few thousand jobs to over 2 million jobs (direct and indirect) in this period (ICEA, 2023). Traditional MSMEs in textiles and apparel saw an expansion due to both export demand and substitution of imports (e.g., Bharat's textile industry added over 1.3 million jobs between 2010 and 2020 – Ministry of

Textiles data). However, the manufacturing sector workforce as a whole has not grown as fast as hoped, due to increased automation and because some labor-intensive industries (like leather goods, low-end apparel) faced global competition issues. The challenge remains to upscale and modernize MSMEs so they can compete globally while continuing to generate jobs.

### **Quality and Competitiveness**

A critical challenge for swadeshi products has been ensuring global-quality standards and price competitiveness. Initially, many Bharatiyan-made products struggled against well-established foreign brands. For instance, Bharatiyan consumer electronics brands in the early 2010s had a reputation for lower quality compared to imports. But through initiatives like the Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) certification for MSMEs and the adoption of ISO standards, quality has improved. By the mid-2020s, products such as Bharatiyan-made mobile phones, appliances (from companies like Dixon, Boat), and even automobiles (Tata's Nexon EV, for example) have proven competitive on quality and are winning consumer trust. Still, brand perception issues persist – surveys show many Bharatiyan consumers continue to view foreign brands as more reliable, especially in categories like luxury cars or high-end electronics (Shashidhar, 2021). Overcoming this requires time, success stories, and effective branding of swadeshi products.

### **Agriculture and Organic Farming**

Agriculture employs about 42% of Bharat's workforce and is a sector where self-reliance has food security implications. Bharat achieved grain self-sufficiency back in the Green Revolution era (1970s) and is now a net food exporter. The swadeshi focus in agriculture has been on sustainable practices and diversifying away from imported inputs.

### **Organic and Natural Farming**

Bharat traditionally had organic farming, but the modern chemical intensive era reduced it. The 2010s saw a revival. In 2010,

Bharat's certified organic farmland was under 0.5 million ha; by 2022–23, certified organic area was ~10.2 million ha (Statista, 2023). This spectacular growth (see Figure 1) was propelled by policy (PKVY), which provided subsidies and training for farmers to switch to organic, and by global/export demand. The northeast Bharatiyan states, for example, adopted organic en masse (Sikkim famously became 100% organic in 2016). Organic product exports from Bharat grew from under \$100 million in 2010 to about \$1,040 million in 2022 (APEDA, 2023), with oilseeds, cereals, tea, and spices being major items. Domestically, organic foods are now available in most supermarkets, reflecting rising local consumption as well.

### **Millets and Traditional Crops**

With climate change concerns, there's renewed interest in traditional hardy crops. Millets (jowar, bajra, ragi, etc.) require far less water and chemical inputs than rice or wheat. Government programs have integrated millets into public distribution and mid-day meals; production of millets rose ~27% from 2015 to 2023 (MoA&FW, 2023). Bharat's leadership in the International Year of Millets 2023 further boosted awareness. Millet- based food startups have emerged, another synergy of swadeshi products and services (food processing industry).

### **Fertilizers and Inputs**

A critical dependency in agriculture was imported fertilizers. Swadeshi efforts include ramping up domestic urea production (new fertilizer plants opened in Uttar Pradesh, etc.) and promoting organic bio fertilizers and traditional practices like composting. By 2022, Neem-coated urea (an Bharatiyan innovation to reduce nutrient loss) became standard, improving efficiency and reducing overall demand. The government has also introduced the One Nation One Fertilizer scheme and is working on nano fertilizers (developed by IFFCO in Bharat) to cut import dependence. Fertilizer import quantity declined about 5% from 2018 to 2023, despite growing agricultural output (Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, 2023), indicating partial success in self-reliance.

## **Environmental impact**

Swadeshi in agriculture aligns strongly with sustainability. Organic and natural farming techniques revive soil health, reduce pollution from chemical runoff, and support biodiversity. The widespread adoption of organic in Bharat's northeast has kept those regions' environment pristine while yielding premium products like Assam organic tea. Additionally, local procurement and shorter supply chains for food (e.g., through Farmer Producer Organisations selling directly to consumers) lower the carbon footprint of food distribution.

Despite these gains, challenges remain in agriculture such as relatively lower yields in organic farms initially and the need for better market linkages for small farmers. Yet, the overall direction supports Bharat's self-reliance in food while making farming more Aatmanirbhar through reduced input imports.

## **Digital Services and Fintech**

As discussed, digital services have been a standout success. To supplement the earlier narrative: Bharat's IT-BPM industry revenue grew from ~\$70 billion in 2010 to ~\$227 billion in 2022 (NASSCOM, 2023).

While a lot of that is export-oriented, domestic IT adoption has also grown. Government e-governance projects like GSTN (Goods & Services Tax Network) and the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan bank accounts- Aadhar-Mobile) have brought millions into the formal system.

One of the most remarkable fintech stories, UPI, has already been detailed. To contextualize: In 2010, digital payments in Bharat were mostly via cards or bank transfers and very limited. By 2025, Bharat will lead the world in real-time payment volume. Digital transactions per capita increased from 2.4 in 2014 to 208 in 2024 (RBI, 2025) – indicating how everyday life has embraced swadeshi digital solutions. Payment apps designed in Bharat (e.g., BHIM UPI app, PhonePe, Paytm) dominate the market. Moreover, the Bharat Stack approach has allowed private innovation atop public digital

infrastructure, creating an ecosystem of swadeshi financial services. It has also allowed the government to transfer benefits like subsidies, pensions directly to citizens' accounts, vastly reducing leakages, making welfare delivery more self-sufficient and less reliant on intermediaries.

#### **Telecommunications is another facet:**

By ensuring multiple Bharatiyan private players in telecom (Jio, Airtel, etc.) and not becoming dependent on any foreign telecom operator, Bharat kept services competitive and affordable. Today, Bharat has one of the lowest mobile data costs globally (\$0.10 per GB, 2023) and one of the highest data usages per capita, which is a foundation for all other digital services.

#### **Healthcare and Telemedicine**

Bharat's pharmaceutical industry also deserves mention under swadeshi products and services. Often called the "pharmacy of the world," Bharat produces over 60% of global vaccines and a large share of generic medicines (EMA, 2021). This is a swadeshi success from earlier decades, but recently it paid dividends: during COVID-19, Bharatiyan companies developed an indigenous vaccine (Covaxin by Bharat Biotech) and massively ramped up production of another (Covishield by Serum Institute). Over 90% of the vaccines administered in Bharat's vaccination drive were produced domestically, and Bharat could even export doses to many countries under "Vaccine Maitri." It highlighted how a strong local pharma sector is critical for health security. The government's policy of promoting generic medicines through initiatives like Jan Aushadhi Kendras (which sell low-cost generics) further ensures that swadeshi healthcare products benefit the masses.

Telemedicine's expansion (eSanjeevani), we covered; it continues to evolve with integrations like diagnostic devices and AI-based decision support being locally developed to assist remote doctors. One new initiative is integrating Bharat's space technology (ISRO) with telemedicine, through satellites connecting far-flung rural health centers to specialty hospitals. This concept of

“tele-health from the skies” is now proven in pilot projects in island and hilly regions of Bharat, again using largely indigenous tech (ISRO’s communication satellites and telemedicine software by Bharatiyan startups).

### **Education and Skilling**

Bharat faces the dual challenge of educating its huge young population and upgrading the skills of its workforce. Swadeshi services in education have seen the government and private sector innovate to reach scale. For instance, the SWAYAM platform (launched in 2017) now offers over 2,000 courses online with more than 10 million students enrolling cumulatively (MOE, 2023). This allows an Bharatiyan student from a small town to take an IIT or IIM-taught course for free or minimal cost—a democratization of quality education. Skill development missions have created e-content for vocational skills in regional languages, which is important for including rural youth.

Notably, Bharatiyan EdTech companies have grown by localizing content and then expanding abroad. Byju’s, a Bharatiyan online tutoring firm started in 2011, by 2020 acquired US-based learning apps and had users in multiple countries. This shows an interesting flip: instead of foreign educational content dominating in Bharat, Bharatiyan content is making inroads globally, reinforcing the confidence in indigenous knowledge systems.

In summary, across sectors, Bharat’s self-reliance drive from 2010 to 2025 has yielded tangible results: a more diverse manufacturing base, a tech-enabled services sector reaching citizens directly, and an agriculture sector slowly shifting towards sustainability. The pillars of the swadeshi mindset, products, and services interplay in these outcomes – public support and policy enable local enterprises to flourish, which in turn increases public confidence in swadeshi solutions.

### **Challenges**

Despite the progress, significant challenges temper the achievements of the swadeshi resurgence. Recognizing these

hurdles is crucial for devising strategies to overcome them.

### **Global Competition and Market Access:**

Bharatiyan products often face tough competition from established global players. Foreign companies benefit from advanced technologies, economies of scale, and well-developed supply chains. For example, Chinese manufacturers still dominate certain sectors with cost advantages – from solar panels to toy manufacturing – making it hard for Bharatiyan SMEs to compete on price. Even within Bharat, consumer preference can tilt towards imported goods if they are cheaper or perceived as better. Gaining entry and market share abroad is another battle; Bharatiyan goods face non-tariff barriers and the need to meet strict standards. Bharatiyan services like IT have done well globally, but areas like Bharatiyan tourism or education have not capitalized on full potential (e.g., attracting foreign students to Bharatiyan universities is still limited). Trade policy can sometimes conflict with swadeshi goals too – joining free trade agreements might open Bharat to more imports (as seen in sectors like electronics or dairy, which raised concerns in RCEP negotiations). Balancing protective measures for nascent industries with the need to integrate into global supply chains remains tricky. The Production-Linked Incentives are one tool being used to offset disabilities and make Bharatiyan goods competitive for export.

### **Supply Chain and Infrastructure Constraints**

Many Swadeshi industries still rely on imported inputs or machinery, which can be a vulnerability. For instance, while Bharat ramped up mobile assembly, key components like microchips and display screens were imported (until local production of those is established by 2025-26). Similarly, to make solar panels domestically, Bharat needs to import polysilicon or wafers currently. The government has launched programs to plug these gaps (like semiconductor fabs, solar equipment PLIs), but results will take time. Infrastructure is another issue: power supply, logistics, and port facilities in Bharat, though improving, can lag behind East Asian

standards. High logistics costs (around 13–14% of GDP in Bharat, vs 8% in China) make exporting or even internal distribution expensive for Bharatiyan producers (NITI Aayog, 2021). The development of freight corridors, better highways, integrated logistics hubs are ongoing efforts needed to reduce this cost. Until infrastructure fully supports just-in-time manufacturing and quick transportation, Bharatiyan products may struggle in global markets where timing and efficiency are critical.

### **Financing and Scale for MSMEs**

While large companies can access capital and invest in R&D, many small enterprises in Bharat face financing constraints. Despite priority sector lending norms, banks are often hesitant to lend to small units without collateral, leading to MSMEs relying on informal credit at high interest. Government schemes (Credit Guarantee, Mudra loans) have helped but not solved the credit gap entirely. Additionally, scaling up – moving from a small enterprise to a medium or large one is challenging due to compliance burdens, limited managerial capacity, or lack of market linkage. This “missing middle” problem means Bharat has many micro units but fewer medium-sized factories than, say, China. Without scaling, cost competitiveness and innovation suffer.

### **Technology and Innovation Gap**

In various sectors, Bharatiyan firms still spend relatively little on R&D (expenditure on R&D is ~0.7% of GDP, much lower than China’s 2 %+). This can limit the development of cutting-edge swadeshi products. For example, in automobiles, Bharatiyan companies are now investing in electric vehicle tech, but global automakers are ahead in battery technology. In pharmaceuticals, Bharat excels at generic drugs but not as much in new drug discovery, which requires huge investments. The government’s push for Atal Innovation Mission, incubation centers, and a National Research Foundation aims to improve this, but the culture of industry-academia collaboration needs strengthening. Brain drain is another aspect: Bharat educates many top engineers and scien-

tists, but a significant number have historically moved abroad for opportunities. Retaining talent in Bharat's innovation ecosystem is vital for swadeshi advancement in high tech areas.

### **Quality and Brand Perception**

As discussed, a lot of Bharatiyan businesses must overcome legacy perceptions about quality. Some Bharatiyan products initially faltered on quality control or consistency (whether it was early Bharatiyan-made cars in the 1990s or electronics). Although much progress has been made, the "Make in Bharat" tag needs to universally signify reliability for swadeshi products to truly conquer the domestic market and then global markets. This is partly a challenge of skilling – ensuring the workforce at all levels has the expertise to produce world-class goods. The proliferation of vocational skilling programs and apprenticeship schemes is addressing this, but industry often cites shortage of certain skills (e.g., precision machining, advanced welding, etc.). Adopting global best practices in manufacturing (like Lean, Six Sigma, Industry 4.0 automation) is essential for quality and productivity, especially for MSMEs that might lack awareness or funds to implement such practices.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

While swadeshi philosophy aligns well with sustainability (as noted through organic farming, etc.), rapid industrial expansion can pose environmental risks. Bharatiyan cities have grappled with severe air and water pollution, partly due to industrial activity and auto emissions. There is a risk that in the rush to "make in Bharat," some businesses might cut corners on environmental compliance if enforcement is weak. This would be counterproductive, as environmental degradation can hurt long-term self-reliance (through health costs, resource depletion). Thus, a challenge is to grow sustainably, scaling up green manufacturing. Encouragingly, Bharat has made commitments (e.g., 500 GW non-fossil power by 2030, electric mobility mission) which should mitigate this. Swadeshi must mean not just "Made in Bharat" but "Responsibly

Made in Bharat”.

### **Inclusivity and Equity**

For swadeshi development to be holistic, it must be inclusive. There are challenges in ensuring that the benefits of self-reliance reach all sections of society and all regions. Some remote or conflict-affected regions (like parts of the northeast, or J&K earlier) have lagged in industrialization. Certain marginalized communities might not automatically benefit unless specific interventions are made (such as promoting women entrepreneurs in MSMEs or cooperatives for tribal artisans). Public policy has started addressing these – e.g., the SFURTI scheme supports cluster development for traditional industries in rural areas, including for marginalized groups, National SC/ST Hub helps entrepreneurs from scheduled castes/tribes to participate in procurement. Still, ensuring that the swadeshi wave lifts all boats is an ongoing challenge.

In facing these challenges, it is important to remember that the swadeshi journey is a long-term endeavor. Many of the East Asian economies took multiple decades of iterative progress to achieve global competitiveness. Bharat’s democratic framework and diversity add complexity, but also a robust foundation for sustainable growth. The next section offers recommendations to tackle these challenges and deepen Bharat’s self-reliance brand globally. These achievements have enhanced Bharat’s economic resilience, insulating it somewhat from global supply disruptions, creating local jobs, and saving foreign exchange by substituting imports with domestic production (for example, electronics import bills leveling off as local production rose).

However, this report also underscores that the journey to full self-reliance is far from complete. The comparative tables and sectoral reviews reveal areas of lag: manufacturing’s share in GDP is yet to reach the ambitious 25% target, Bharatiyan R&D investment is still modest, and trade deficits persist in sectors like electronics and oil (despite improvements in others). Challenges like global competition, technology gaps, and infrastructural deficits need continuous and focused efforts to overcome. The swadeshi

movement in the 21st century must remain dynamic and adaptive, learning from both the successes and shortcomings of the past decade.

Importantly, self-reliance should not be misconstrued as self-sufficiency at all times a modern economy will always involve exchange. Rather, as Thengadi Ji articulated, it is about the spirit of self-determination and the capability to stand on our own feet when needed. It is about minimizing critical vulnerabilities and maximizing the use of a nation's resources for its people's benefit. In this sense, Bharat's self-reliance mission aligns with global sustainability and inclusive growth goals. A more self-reliant Bharat is also better positioned to contribute to the world – by exporting affordable medicines, sharing digital public goods, or offering its robust economic market as an alternative engine of growth.

For policymakers, the key takeaway is that investing in indigenous capacity pays off, though often with a lag. The policies initiated around 2014–2020 are bearing fruit in mid-2020s; likewise, investments made now in areas like semiconductors, green energy, and advanced manufacturing will define the state of self-reliance in the 2030s. Therefore, a consistent long-term vision, immune to short-term political cycles, is essential. Public support will be sustained if people tangibly feel the benefits – job creation, better services, and pride in national achievements – which in turn requires keeping the people at the center of the swadeshi agenda. This means empowering small entrepreneurs, farmers, and youth with the tools to participate in the self-reliant economy, whether via credit, training, or digital access.

In conclusion, Bharat's stride towards self-reliance in the 2010–2025 period has been significant and multidimensional. It has validated the belief that a large and diverse democracy can pursue an indigenous growth model successfully in a globalized world. As Bharat stands on the cusp of becoming the third-largest economy, the swadeshi approach will be instrumental in ensuring that this growth is robust, equitable, and sustainable. The Swadeshi mindset

ignited the ambition, Swadeshi products built the foundation of industrial and agricultural strength, and Swadeshi services are propelling the nation into a digital future. Together, they are shaping an Bharat that is confident of its place in the world – an Bharat that seeks not dominion, but the rightful opportunity to craft its destiny and contribute to the global good as an equal. That, ultimately, is the essence of building self-reliance in the spirit of swadeshi.

### **Policy Recommendations**

In the interest of promoting self-reliance and preserving India's cultural, economic, and technological sovereignty, it is proposed that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and other related policy instruments be oriented to reflect and reinforce the 'Swadeshi' ethos. The following sector-wise recommendations are submitted for your consideration:

#### **Textiles and Garments**

Policies should promote the use of fabrics and garments that are suitable for the Indian climate and aligned with Indian ethos and sensibilities. This includes encouraging natural fibers, region-specific textiles, and traditional attire through incentives and awareness campaigns.

#### **Food and Agriculture**

Food-related policies should support Indian farmers by promoting indigenous crops and farming practices. Align with Indian dietary patterns and culinary traditions. Be compatible with Ayurveda and other traditional Indian medical systems to promote holistic health.

#### **Art and Craft**

India's rich tradition of arts and crafts must be preserved and promoted. Policies should encourage artisans through direct support and skill enhancement programs. Foster competition with international markets by enabling Indian artisans to upgrade qual-

ity and design without compromising authenticity.

### **Films and Television**

Media content should be leveraged to Promote Indian traditions, languages, and cultural values align with Indian moral and social sensibilities. Discourage the portrayal of vulgarity, profanity, or soft pornographic content in scripts, lyrics, or dialogues.

### **Banking and Finance**

Reorient financial policies to Prioritize capacity-building loans over consumer finance. Provide easy and affordable financing options for young entrepreneurs to start small and medium enterprises. Encourage investment in sectors with high indigenous value-addition.

### **Retail and FMCG**

Encourage the production and retail of traditional Indian products using modern technology. Promote R&D focused on enhancing the quality, packaging, and global appeal of traditional Indian items such as spices, ayurvedic products, textiles, etc.

### **Defense, Software, and Telecom**

Ensure that critical technological infrastructure—especially in software—remains sovereign by mandating that source codes be maintained within India. Encourage the development of indigenous technology that can interface with but is not dependent upon foreign systems. Avoid policies that lead to the over-consumption of foreign goods and services at the cost of domestic innovation.

### **Conclusion**

A Swadeshi-oriented policy framework is not about isolation, but about strengthening India from within. Policies must be rooted in Indian values while being globally competitive. The objective is to preserve our heritage, empower our people, and ensure sustainable growth driven by indigenous capacity and innovation.

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- Note: Additional data in text was drawn from Government of Bharat reports (Economic Survey, Union Budget documents), NASSCOM reports, and news releases by various ministries (Commerce, Agriculture, etc).

## About the Authors

**Satish Kumar** has been associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh since 1982 as Pracharak serving in Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab. Since 2013 he has been actively engaged in the economic sphere through the Swadeshi Jagran Manch where he currently serves as Akhil Bharatiya Sah-Sangathan.

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An accomplished author, Satish Kumar has penned numerous books, including India's Development Journey, World Trade War and the Swadeshi Perspective, Employment and the Swadeshi Path, and Pragyan: Igniting 37 Crore Growth Engine. His work continues to influence thought and action in the fields of economics, policy and national self-reliance.

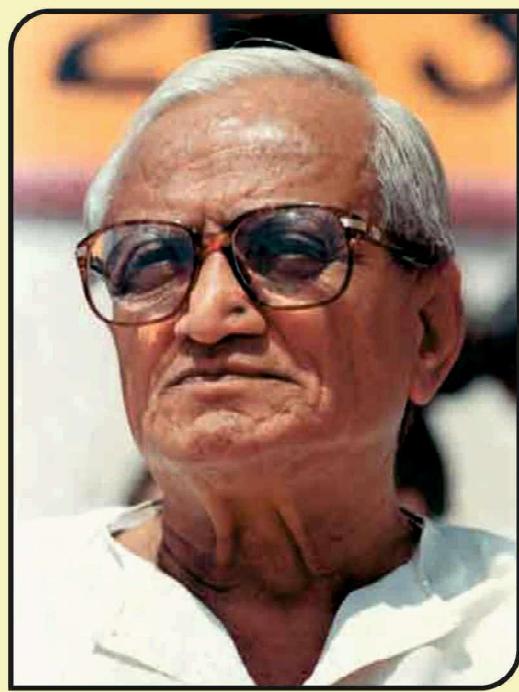
**Prof. Pradeep S. Chauhan** is a distinguished economist and researcher with over 27 years of academic and professional experience. He is currently Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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## **Dattopant Thengadi**

**(1920-2004)**

*(Founder of Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh)*

**“It is wrong to presume that ‘Swadeshi’ concerns itself only with the goods or services. That is more an incidental aspect. Essentially, it concerns the spirit determined to achieve national self-reliance, preservation of national sovereignty and independence, and international co-operation on equal footing.... 'Swadeshi' was not merely an economic affair confined to material goods but a broad-based ideology embracing all departments of national life.”**