The ‘Swadesi Movement’ in Indian Hip-Hop

Dr. Yatindra Hruday Ingle,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Mass Media,
Usha Pravin Gandhi College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Mumbai, India

Abstract: The word ‘Swadeshi’ is derived from the Bengali, ‘Svadesi’, or from the Sanskrit, svadesin. Literally, it means from ‘one’s own country’; it came to mean the use in India of Indian manufactures or services in preference to imported goods or European provided services. Whatever emotional support it may have enjoyed in India, as an economic movement it was effective only in its final phase. After Independence the freedom of expression and a free voice made the Swadesi Movement as a righteous tool to express their views to the Government. With the new media being flourished in India and the ‘New Wave’ expressing their thoughts in their own genres about the historic movements, this paper discusses the performances, lyrics and music of the ‘Swadesi Rap Crew’ from India. Swadesi is a group of young rappers, producers, DJs and Graffiti artists that aim to bring about a change through art and music. We believe that the future of our country lies in the hands of the youth empowered with the idea of ‘Swadesi’ that is embracing all things in Indian. Their creations reflect the school of thoughts of the Swadesi Movement in public, on stage and on social media. This study looks at the music produced by the group involving the Swadeshi Movement and at the usages of these performative and art forms to speak their minds of the movement. Their ability to create and disseminate content independent of the institutionalized mass media to explore and assert their thoughts and voice along with their identities of the Swadeshi Movement was the subject of this exploratory and descriptive study.

Index Terms. Hip-Hop, Rap, Youth, Swadeshi Movement

I. INTRODUCTION

For decades, hip-hop has been perceived as empty and lacking in thought, which has led to harsh criticism of it. However, hip-hop has also been effective in creating and expanding the awareness of various social movements, despite being an unorthodox way of doing so and often being overlooked as a successful means. As hip-hop has risen in popularity, so has a safe haven for the expression of the oppressed. As opposed to other genres, it can speak volumes because it is a staple of youth and modern culture. Today’s generations see hip-hop being synonymously used with aiding social movements because it unconsciously communicates the message that their culture is accepted and can make a difference, which contradicts the common critique that modern culture (hip-hop in particular) usually receives. Hip-hop is celebrated throughout the world, and its span covers many demographics and ethnicities. In recent years, hip-hop has aided revolutionary democratic movements in Africa, the Middle East, and South America, showing that the impact and influence hip-hop has had in no way has been isolated to America.

Hip-Hop originated in the margins, coming from economically depressed, socially oppressed areas with heavy African American populations in South Bronx, New York. It was first created in the 1970’s “to combat frustrations of economic turmoil and racial discrimination”. While it became popular among minorities, it was generally disliked among non-minority communities due to its criticism of their discriminatory practices. This expression, as mentioned above, was once met with harsh opposition, but modern day hip-hop has had the ability to cause more widespread change due to an increasingly open-minded atmosphere surrounding social issues, with people of all backgrounds showing support for movements addressing all kinds of issues. The genre has evolved into one that is associated with social activism, and the fact that it has gone more public has greatly assisted its progress.

Hip hop is a vehicle for spreading awareness on social issues by making those issues more well-known to the audience. The artists express their opinions about the different social issues in their lyrics, which can echo throughout a community and cause positive change. What makes it especially effective, in addition to giving modern culture a voice, is that many of the artists were (and still are in many cases) directly impacted by the social issues that these movements work to spread awareness for. Many of them grew up in low-income backgrounds and in
neighbourhoods notorious for high crime rates. This allows for them to empathize with their listeners, bringing the message of the movements to a personal level as their music tell authentic stories of their experiences with gun and gang violence, political oppression, and general inner-city life.

Hip Hop music or rap music is a classification created by African-Americans in the United States around 1970’s. The hip-hop culture incorporates MCing or rapping, DJing, break moving and spray painting composing. This kind has turned out to be massively famous in India and has of late progressed toward becoming standard. Indian Hip Hop or Desi hip hop has turned into a sub-type of the hip-hop development. It is fundamentally a mix of hip jump and Indian impacts performed by specialists of South Asian starting points.

Hip Hop is ending up being an amazing type of dissent music in the nation among the young prompting its massive prominence today. The web has assumed a significant job in the advancement of hip jump as hopeful rappers got more access to the pioneers of the class and notwithstanding sharing their work to the world turned out to be a lot simpler as spectators got used to devouring worldwide music styles on account of the internet. Today one can record music without account studios just with online applications and contraptions.

Music has consistently been an impression of how society and people work. Regardless of whether you incline toward Britney Lances' bubblegum pop verses of pathetic love or Metallica's shake and metal on youth fears and bad dreams, you're as yet conscious of the human condition as sound. Hip jump and rap, classifications of music, have components of writing, governmental issues, and verse, which make them monstrously important and ideal instances of how human lives and conditions can be depicted through music. Hip jump and road rap likewise have infamous notorieties for provocative verses that don't sugar-coat network battles, regardless of whether with substance misuse and destitution or police ruthlessness and prejudice. Indian rap is particularly novel as a result of how intersectional and different Indian personality is. Indian culture contrasts from area to district, food to cooking, and language to language, bringing forth a staggering exhibit of points of view as well as a situation exceptionally inclined to strife. So it's nothing unexpected that when activism and dissent contacts the music business, it is most bolsterously and gladly vocalized through rap. The youthful rappers of India today are strong and contemptuous, while courageous utilizing their foundation to feature issues and causes they put stock in. (Project, 2016)

The researcher has content analyzed the rap songs of the crew named ‘Swadesi’. This is a group of young Emcess producers, DJs and graffiti artists that aim to bring about a change through our art and music. We believe that the future of our country lies in the hands of the youth empowered with the idea of 'Swadesi'; they say their lyrics have a lot of heart, and that working with a recording studio would cloud what they believe in.

The researcher has studied the rap track ‘Warli Revolt’ by the Swadesi Crew and discusses the issues raised in the rap in accordance with the Swadesi Movement. The Warli revolt of 1945–7 is a critical watershed in the agrarian history of Thane district, and has had a lasting significance (Ambasta 1998). The demand for land and the demand for higher wages were two important pivots of the movements led by the Kisan Sabha from the 1940s through the 1960s. Such movements included struggles against slavery and forced labour, landlords and moneylenders, and for land, tenancy rights, and forest plots; the issues raised ranged from higher wages for grass-cutting to the question of autonomy of the Adivasi people. This rap also narrates and showcases how the Hip-Hop genre in India has been aligned to social movements in the current conditions and situations of the Urban-Rural divide of Indian developmental systems.

II. Review of Literature
The swadeshi had been central to India’s freedom movement. Swadeshi is based on endogenously managed development rather than exogenously controlled development (Parmatam Parkash Arya, 1999). Now, swadeshi Vs Videshi has become prominent in news media; such a collection of ideas has started to form a shared set of images and concerns about life in future. The term Swadeshi has appeals to sections of Indians and perhaps has an appeal to all the Indians. Swadeshi means “What we can do, and let us do!”

The swadeshi movement has been classically studied in terms of its social constructiveness and its cultural productivity. (Manjara, October 2012). Swadeshi movement in India took a propaganda move with inflammatory speeches to boycott foreign goods which made the leaders, victorious generals. These speeches found sudden change in the behaviour of the youth to push them in supporting the anti-British activities (Nair, 1985). The campaign to popularize this movement took many forms, including the organization of exhibitions that demonstrated cloth production and sold khadi goods. On the occasion of one such exhibition in 1927, Gandhi explained the significance of exhibitions for the movement: These exhibitions were designed to be really a study for those who want to
understand what this khadi movement stands for, and what it has been able to do. It is not a mere ocular demonstration to be dismissed out of our minds immediately (Trivedi, 2003). Rethinking the politics and ethics of consumption by initiating dialogues with Swadeshi movements and Gandhi in order to transform the spaces of production transcending the concern for consumption choices, the researcher explored pathways of improvement of quality of life, experiences in happiness and fulfilment, both individual and collective, by creating a culture of self-development, responsible consumption and community building efforts on the basis of sharing and concern for others (Giri, 2004).

Examine the role of the nationalist ideology of *swadeshi* in a contemporary anti-consumption movement and show that its deployment is linked to the experiences of colonialism, modernity, and globalization in India. Specifically, we offer a postcolonial understanding of reflexivity and nationalism in an anti-consumption movement opposing Coca-Cola in India (Rohit Varman, 2009).

Polish hip-hop, with its origins and evolution, confirms the link between hip-hop and social exclusion. Its history coincides with the transition from socialism to democracy and the free-market economy. The changes in hip-hop forms, functions, formal and informal distribution, and in its reception, reflect a rapidly changing socio-economic situation, and illustrate the importance of the specific social context for this genre. Without it, the elements of hip-hop (DJing, MCing, break dancing and graffiti) functioned as separate entities, not as constituent parts of a whole. Mainstreaming amplified the voice of the “new others” of post-socialism, but at the price of its distortion and of hip-hop as its ineluctable destiny. Hip-hop creates an opportunity to include a grass-roots perspective within the conceptual scheme of post-socialism, an angle that is rarely explored. Most studies of regime transition are regularly focused on themes of institutional politics or economic transformations and adopt an elite-centered point of view. The intensity of socio-economic changes in turn highlights processes that would otherwise be much harder to identify. The changes in hip-hop’s forms, functions, formal and informal distribution, and reception, reflect a rapidly changing socio-economic situation and illustrate the importance of a specific social context for this musical genre (Pasternak-Mazur, 2009). Drawing on contemporary transgressive theoretical approaches, this paper examines how modern urban youth populations perform new identities by manipulating ‘global–local’ cultural and linguistic resources available to them such as popular culture flows. In its search for a post-Socialist identity, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, urban settings in Mongolia have been largely caught between the emerging transcultural flows. Young urban Mongolians have been participating in these current dynamic global interactions in multiple ways, while locating and styling their new identities within fluid spaces such as popular music. The linguistic practice of popular music in this regard is the main site for the exploration of the new identities performed by the urban youth population both as producers and consumers. It is the most dynamic and expressive space for urban youth to play, perform and negotiate within their identities (Dovchin, 2011).

### III. Research Design

**Aim of the study:**

To find how the Indian rap movement helps narrate or counter-narrate the ‘Swadeshi Movement post-independence India’.

**Objective of the study:**

To study the involvement of the Swadeshi Movement in the rap song.

To study the content/lyrics of the rap songs aligned with the Swadeshi Movement.

**Hypothesis:**

i. Does the framework of the rap and the lyrics align with the Swadeshi Movement.

ii. The framework of the rap and the lyrics does not align with the Swadeshi Movement.
Research Methodology:

i. Research Method

Content analysis method is been used for the interpretation of the data. The lyrics of the rap song ‘Warli Revolt’ has been studied and analysed by the researcher. (Parveen, 2017)

ii. Sample size

One rap song has been studied by the research based on the recent social issues of Mumbai from the Month of June-August.

IV. Theoretical Approach

José Arturo Saavedra Casco aims to show through a brief recount of the history of rap in Tanzania the social and political contents of Tanzanian hip-hop songs, mentioning the characteristics of the messages and their impact on Tanzanian youth. This article also remarks on the local elements, beside the use of Swahili language, contained in Tanzanian rap that are inherited from Swahili pre-colonial poetry. Finally, it gives several examples of the social and protest contents in songs of remarkable Tanzanian hip-hop artists, such as Mr. II, Professor Jay and Wagosi wa Kaya. (Saavedra, 2006)

Content Analysis:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Original Lyrics of the Rap song Warli Revolt</th>
<th>Translation in English</th>
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| Verse 1 – Rapper Mawali:                     | "I’m a Warli Adivasi, Our story is an ancient one. We are indigenous, We bring life where there was none. In this jungle even our lives are green, Waghoba is our feline God. Put a hold to your ‘development dream’ back off from our forest, be gone forever! You tempt us with material gains, just to make us your slaves. Your future is a cunning lie, but the present is what I am living with. You’re selling us your ‘Fake Progress’, but you know who is raking in the profits. Who’s cutting down our sacred fortress, Who even wants a metro in a forest? It breaks my heart to see you putting innocent animals behind bars. Dividing the spoils, money and land too. You claim open skies that are rightfully ours. You politicians are sweet talking scum, calling our Adivasi homes slums. Manipulating facts, making fools of everyone. Getting rich, stuffing your pockets with a hefty sum."

Me tho warli aadiwasi Amchya padhati hait etihaseek Hya rana cha mool nivasi Jeev anto padsar matit Pran girva majha dev ahe wagoba Pragati tumchi baad amchya jungleaatna maagh wha Paisa kiti dakhwal? Bhawtik sukache chakar whal Bhavishya tumche hai labad

Me jagto hai tho wartaman Pragrat che tumche dhong Pahatar paise chaptai kon Jhade amchi kaptai kon ni Junglat metro magtai kon Jhale hai jagne dukh hai Pinjaryat ghalta janawar muke Kele maal matache tukde Pahuna det tumha akash mokale Godbole neta te songade, adiwasyan che ghar mhande jhopde chombde te labad bombale

Swai Kisha madhe rokda kombale Sahu me ka. tumchi tudawani Pahu tari kiti tumchi fasawani Nishi Dini amha deeta ashaanti Atta vadun maati kapalpatti. Dharin baan Me hoyin raanti Yataajaat mag yel, karnti
Bhit na tula me Tilka manjhi Hasi hasi chadbo fassi

Chorus 1:
Manus mhanun jagnyaasaathi amhala Sara karaycha.Aaj nahi udalya maraycha tar kashala maga saraycha

Verse 2 – Rapper Todfod:
Hume na pasand ye khota vikas, na hai tum jaise choron pe vishwas Metro banane ukhado tum zhaad jab zhaad na bachenge kaise loge saans Ghar mera jungle khula aakash, tum aye traas dene karne iska nash Prakriti ka banao mazak yahi prakriti se bani manav jaat

Verse 3 – Rapper Saurabh:

Why should we step aside? How long should we watch you trample our pride?

Day and night you tortured us, took us for a ride until our patience was forced out of us.

Right now at this moment, I were to smear my forehead in the soil of the land.

Grab my weapon and show you my wild side. A massive revolution before you will stand.

I am not scared of you, I am Tilkha Manjhi. With a smile on my face, I’ll lay down my life if need be.

To live like human what should we do? To live like human what should we do? Death will come today or tomorrow, so why to be afraid and step back (for protecting the jungle) Death will come today or tomorrow, so why to be afraid and step back (for protecting the jungle)

We don’t like your ‘fake development’, nor do we trust your thieves.

To build a metro you’re killing the trees. When they are gone then how’ll you breathe? The jungle and sky are my home, You come here, mess with us and destroy our home.

Nature for man has lost its worth but she is the one who truly gave us birth. Today you are trying to throw us out snatching away our home and ground.

All we have left is the way we live now, but you want to steal that too, somehow mess with our lives.

What did our birds and animals do, why are you evicting them too? Your sell-out industrialist government is making us fools.

Making your money by making us move.

Setting up an evil condition, for which their own kids will find them guilty. It’s a regret that they won’t be around to see the next generation suffer.

So ‘Be and let be’ - As long as you live, plant tree after tree. Wake up and open your mind you fools before it’s all gone and there is nothing left to lose.

There’s just one life to live, proof of my status you want me to give? I am an Adivasi, I am a poor man. How do I even
I am a farmer and I grow my own food. Every animal here is part of my brood.

Now do yourself a favor, save your own treasure, it’s yours too! Now we tribals created life from what was once a barren ground. But evil goons from villages nearby destroyed everything around. If anyone dare repeat this crime again, they will be buried right then and there!

Death will come today or tomorrow, so why to be afraid and step back (for protecting the jungle). Jungle’s life! Jungle’s food! Jungle’s power!

Sons of the soil, sons of our mother. The forest animals are like my brothers. The minute I scream “hukurukuku”, they will rip you asunder! Innocent people might call you their master, but you’re just a sweet-talker, a destructive disaster.

Your ministers are like puppets you pull, nodding their heads like nandi the bull. Sending out orders to cut down the trees, but who comes here to plant another? Not their fathers, in their fancy quarters! Balding, toothless swine, lusting after girls like they are objects.

In our jungle, we give and take respect. Dancing together hand in hand. Tarpas and drums our Warli band, our words dance through the land. Our women and children are brave. We all live like brothers and sisters now, just like we did before. Our Warli Art has global fame. We grow our own food. We are nobody’s slaves.

So dependent to motor cars, just look at how much oil you are burning. Your factories spit out poisonous smoke, leaving behind a thick, black cloak.

They have spent so much on guns and cavalry, not a rupee is spent on feeding the hungry. But history will show you the score, that no Warli ever died of starvation before.

You call yourselves patriotic. Then why asking us to be the sacrifice? You call yourselves patriotic. Then why asking us to be the sacrifice? The jungle is our mother, to save her we will lay
The lyrics of the song have been translated and the analysis has been done below:

The Marathi rap song, titled *The Warli Revolt*, is something of a war cry. It begins by outlining the history of the Warli people, and then goes on to suggest that development projects are selling “fake progress” for profits. The song threatens a “massive revolution” against the cutting down of the forest. This rap is sung by the rapper MC Mawali, Mc TodFod, 100RbH and the ancestral chieftain of the Warli community in Aarey and Sanjay Gandhi National park is a man named Prakash Bhoir. This rap narrates the issues and problems faced by the Warli Community due to the foreign industrial interference in their land. Here, the land in this song is the jungle where the Warli Community resides. More than a plea to keep the Warlis' habitat safe, it is an ultimatum to the authorities that the community will protect what is rightfully theirs even if it means laying down their lives. The lyrics pull no punches. There are lines in the Marathi track that read, "Gor bole neta aate sungare/ Adivasan chhe ghar mane jhopare [Your politicians are sweet-talking scum/ Calling our adivasi homes slums]," and others that translate to, "Right now, at this moment, if I were to smear the soil of my land on my forehead, grab my weapon and show you my wild side, you will be faced with a massive revolution." Don't mess, in other words. This community have been the cultivators and protectors of the jungles. While this rap has been a protest the industrial revolution in the jungles that is, cutting down of the forest for construction of the metro-rail bridges the lyrics narrate the story and the outcry of the Warli Community. The lyrics put an emphasis on the animals, which are worshiped by the people from the Warli community. These animals are now been caged and killed due to the construction taking place inside the jungles. Also, the rap states that the Warli Community grows, eats and cultivates their own shelter, food and living and does not wish any interference of the foreign companies into their jungles. Another aspect of this rap song is the betrayal of these foreign companies towards the Warli community in giving fake promises and making profits over it. Likewise, this rap also narrates the problems and conditions caused by the constructions in the jungle to the Warli community which has been suffering tremendously. It’s a straight warning towards the foreign industry asking them not to enter the jungles and if they do so, they will have to face an extreme strong protest and revolt by the Warli community.

V. Observations and Conclusions:

As the Swadeshi Movement started by Mahatama Gandhi has led with the characteristics like – Public meetings and gatherings, forming up of ‘Samitis’, Imaginitive move of popular festivals, emphasis given to self-reliance or ‘Atma-Shakti’, Swadeshi enterprise, Impact in cultural sphere, mass participation (Aggarwal, 2016) likewise the Warli Revolt rap song has messages for public gatherings, calling the whole Warli Community together to support the movement, spread of the protest through the Warli art-work, being self reliance against the foreign industries trying to cut down the forests, growing their own livelihood, influence the Warli community for major participation.

Thus, we accept the Hypothesis: the framework of the rap and the lyrics align with the Swadeshi Movement started by Mahatama Gandhi.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


