

Khadi: A Zero Carbon Footprint Industry

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We are increasingly talking about building a modern nation. While it is important to develop infrastructure, scientific spirit, technical strength, military might, artistic excellence and all those diverse faculties that characterize modernity, it is more important for us to recognize our foundational capacities, going forward. A nation owes much to the grain it is made of. And building a dream depends much on the foundations that have stayed with us for long.

Even after centuries of British rule, we, as a nation, have remained distinctly grooved to the cultural and traditional ways of lives. Mahatma Gandhi was quick to perceive that our future lies in our core strength at the grass root level and that it cannot be built on a foundation of imported values. In 1920, in the middle of British imperialism in India, Gandhiji launched 'Khadi' as a political weapon of nationalism within the Swadeshi Movement. By calling it 'the livery of freedom', he brought the eternal symbolism of self sufficiency to India. He demonstrated to the British that India could sustain on its own, while at the same time, gave the pride to Indians that they were free to weave

the prosperity of their own lives from the fabric of their daily lives.

Khadi and village productivity became a grand source of nationalism and India demonstrated to the world that our society is uniquely founded on the efforts and contributions of the rural masses. As such, Khadi came to be known not just a piece of cloth, it came to be a harbinger of peace and an icon of our freedom and national existence.

After independence, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) was established as a statutory body by the Government of India under the KVIC Act 1956. This was a tribute to the power of self sufficiency that built a nation. A nation that had a huge human resource that was willing to work but was bereft of economic resources had to channelize the collective human power and talents to produce useful national products, while also supporting individuals to earn a livelihood and prosper. And India could never have pursued anything more significant and suitable than this aspiration of encouraging Khadi and Village Industries.

Production of Khadi is by far the largest rural productivity programme in the world, wherein thousands of families directly reach their produce to the consumer without the menace

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of middlemen or complex marketing apparatus. It provides the rural communities a high value for their effort while providing the consumers a great value for money. For the nation, it is undoubtedly an invaluable asset of heritage.

Over 5000 institutions and more than 3.20 lakhs micro entrepreneurs form the vast network machinery, implementing the objectives and programmes of KVIC in India. Over one crore persons are engaged in productive activities under KVICs various schemes. The Khadi activity is predominantly women based and over 80 per cent artisans of Khadi are women. In the Village Industry Programme, the share of women is 30 per cent. Khadi & Village Industry sector generates over Rs. 40000/- crores turnover of Khadi & Village Industry products, out of which 40 per cent flows back under Khadi activities to rural communities as livelihood support.

At a time now when the world is talking very seriously about the ill effects of climate change and the enlarging carbon foot prints of industrialization, India needs to establish on world stage the zero carbon footprint of Khadi industry, against the inadequately studied environmental harm being done by the synthetic textile industries. Based on estimated annual global textile production of over 60 billion kilograms (KG) of fabric, the estimated energy and water needed to produce it is: 1,074 billion KWh of electricity (or 132 million metric tons of coal) and between 6 – 9 trillion litres of water. The synthetic textile industry is one of the largest green house gas emitters, amounting to about 1/20th of the total carbon produced.

However, Khadi is hand spun and hand woven, using no electricity in the process of production. It is completely organic and carbon neutral. In more ways than one, Khadi should occupy a coveted place in the fabric industry



Newly established Charkha and Looms Unit near Pampore in Srinagar.

as the yarn of future. This is the fundamental basis on which, we need to take Khadi to the global stage and demonstrate its modern relevance and future role for a cleaner and sustainable world.

Hon'ble Prime Minister in his "Mann Ki Baat" rightly said that "We want to establish Khadi Gramudiyog network in the villages of India. Khadi has the potential to generate employment for millions."

The importance the Hon'ble PM attaches to Khadi particularly to the cause of artisans, mirrors the role of that

the sector can play in nation building. The Hon'ble PM has very recently given a slogan "**Azadi ke pehle khadi for nation and azadi ke baad khadi for fashion**" He further said "We must promote the use of Khadi. Buy at least one khadi article. If you buy Khadi, you light the lamp of prosperity in the house of a poor person." After this appeal, Khadi fabric and garments showed a 29 per cent surge last year. This trend is still continuing.

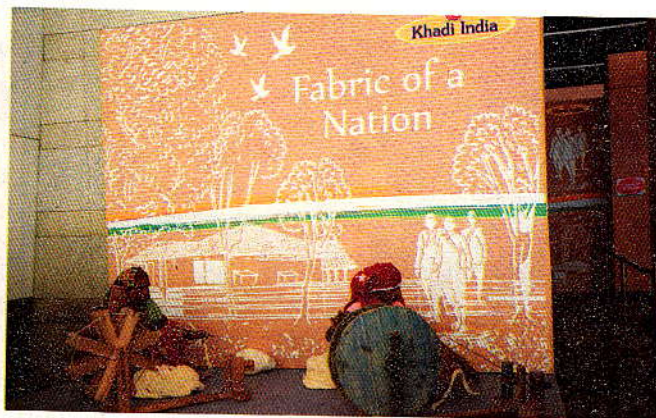
Khadi, as a fabric has adapted to changing needs of modern society and today, the thousands of production centers have been producing fusion



Napkin stitching center at Nagrota, Jammu.



A lady working on Charkha at Dausa, Rajasthan.



More than 65 years old ladies working on traditional charkha.

fabric products, combining the strengths of cotton, polyester, silk and other material in different proportions, depending on user requirements.

“One Yarn, One Nation” is now the new tag line. The branding has been changed from ‘Khadi’ to ‘Khadi India’. Under ‘One Yarn One Nation’ tag line, KVIC organized a one month National Khadi Exhibition from 5th May to 4th June 2016, in Srinagar-the first such exhibition after independence in militancy- affected J&K. It showcased products made by 198 Khadi Institutions from all over the country -56 of them were from Jammu & Kashmir. More than 1 Lakh visitors and sales of Rs. over 2 crore sealed its success. In May 2016, KVIC started a unit of 25 Charkhas and 5 Looms near Pampore in Kashmir and also started a napkin stitching project for militancy – affected families in Village Nagrota in District Jammu employing 296 women there.

To make a grand entry into the global fashion scene, KVIC appointed international fashion designer Ms.Ritu Beri as Advisor to the Commission to advise on introduction of state of the art multi-fashion designs and styles in khadi readymade garments and on promotion of Khadi in the country and abroad.

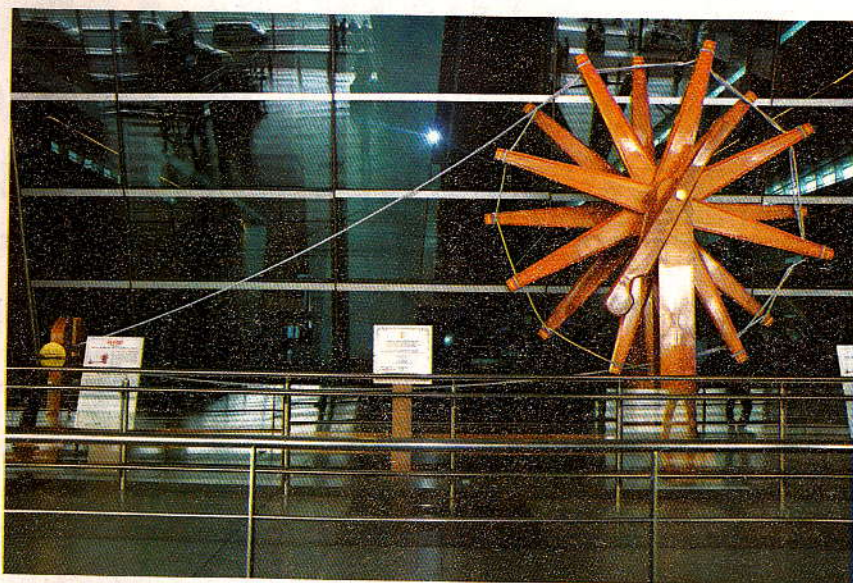
With this background, KVIC has an onerous responsibility of engaging the poorer and rural masses in productive

employment. KVIC has thus, been mandated to serve as one of the main vehicles for rural development in India, by way of creating, promoting, encouraging and sustaining village enterprises of a very large diversity, among which, Khadi is the prime product.

I have always believed that Charkha, like our memorial to unknown soldiers, is a memorial to the unknown rural masses, who heard the call of the Father of the Nation and took to his demonstrated ways of self reliance and dignity of labour. We may not have fully documented or remembered every person who became the foot soldier of the non-violent freedom movement by

weaving a yarn, but when we celebrate Charkha, we pay tribute to all of them symbolically. From this point of view, I believe that installing this symbol of Swaraj in a prime place in the capital was a very appropriate way of bringing to our constant attention what we should not forget.

Keeping in mind the importance of Charkha, world’s largest Charkha, 30 feet long,17 feet tall, 9 feet wide, weighing more than 4 tons and made of Burma teak was installed by KVIC at T-3 IGI Airport, New Delhi, where millions of people from all over the world will have an opportunity to pause for a moment and appreciate its historic symbolism to India. Notwithstanding



World's Largest Wooden Charkha installed at Terminal 3 , at IGI Airport New Delhi



Stitching training to a young lady in Village Jayapur, Varanasi.

One of the main missions of KVIC is to generate employment in the rural areas. Over 2 million employment opportunities have been created by PMEGP since its inception in the country. One of the main contributions of the employment schemes of KVIC is to halt the urban migration of rural

people, thereby encouraging the indigenous talent to prosper in rural areas.

Besides the many programmes and initiatives being pursued by KVIC, it is important to revive

sick village industries, double the sales and develop a mechanism of providing higher remuneration to the artisans. KVIC also wishes to utilize solar energy to run the weaving units, thereby reducing the dependence on physical labour. Bringing insurance to weavers, including them in a reliable network of health services, enhancing their educational capacity and bringing recognition for them and their efforts in the global mainstream of life are the most coveted objectives being pursued by KVIC.

In all, the Khadi and Village Industries are increasingly proving their high relevance to modern India and the modern world as one of the most sustainable socio-economic models developed in human history. □

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that, the International Airport in New Delhi is our gateway to the National Air Space. And Charkha's presence at this gateway to sky reminds us of Mahatma Gandhi's clarion call for Swaraj in 1924, giving wings to our aspiration to freedom.

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