

Providing Food to Hungry Stomachs

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Right from 1918, Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khadi as a relief programme for the poor masses, living in Indian villages, spinning and weaving. It was soon elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and self-governance. Following Mahatma's call, every village soon started planting and harvesting its own raw materials for yarn. All women and men were engaged in spinning and weaving, respectively, whatever was needed for their own use.

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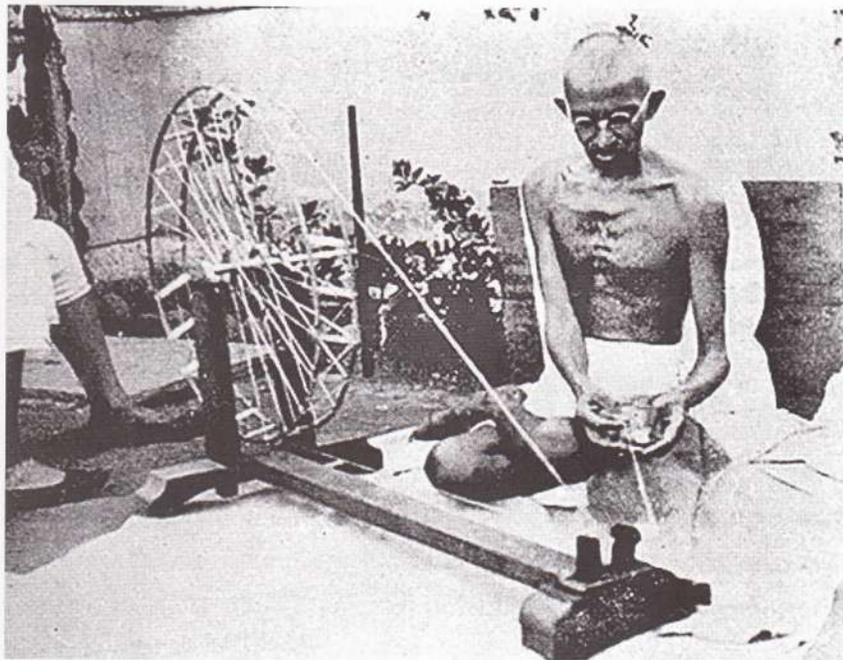
When Gandhiji says, "Khadi gives food to hungry stomachs and your dress becomes the flag of the values you cherish," it has a lot of meanings. Since for Gandhi, Khadi symbolises Swadeshi, for the masses – it turns into the spirit in themselves

that restricted them to use and service of their immediate surroundings to the exclusion of more remote.

Gandhi always believed that much of the deep poverty of the masses was due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. He anticipated that even Swadeshi – like any other good thing – can be ridden to death, if it is made a fetish. And, here comes Khadi

– owing doctrine of selfless service with its roots in the purest *Ahimsa* – that guarded the nation against this danger.

Swadeshi is for that where a country produces all the goods it needs from its own resources. Every village/region produces all it needs by using its local resources. Gandhi used to say that Swadeshi Dharma demands that India preferably should boycott



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all foreign goods, even if they might be beneficial to the country. Swadeshi means that the villages should enjoy the things that are available locally, whether it is agriculture, small industry, handicrafts etc.

To nurture the spirit of Swadeshi one could keep on working together with his neighbour and do business also. Things which we can produce in the country should not be imported from abroad. In other word, Swadeshi is neighbourly feeling of affinity. But at present, import has laid a major impact on the economy of our country. Latest in this context is the example of Agarbatti manufacturing industry in India, which had been one of the core village industries in the country since time immortal. It had been crippling since relaxation in import of raw agarbatti, round bamboo sticks and other odoriferous articles was allowed. Khadi's Agarbatti units

were gasping to breathe prior to 29th August this year, when these items were brought in Restricted Bracket of import. Notably, Khadi has undertaken a Bamboo Plantation Drive across the country to reduce India's dependency of import in Agarbatti Industry and to create millions of local employment – which is the core aim of Gandhian philosophy of Swaraj and Swadeshi.

Khadi and Swadeshi always reduce the gap between rich and poor, which has incidentally increased around the world during last five decades. The rich people's income increased by 7 times around the globe during these five decades. The gap between rich and poor is growing on and on.

According to Stephen Graffdy, the greatest danger of globalisation is that State loses control over the economy, profit can be taken out of the country and local accountability

of companies seems to be over. We must not forget that 43 per cent people of India are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and other small business entities like pottery, carpentry, leather-crafts, handicrafts etc. for a livelihood.

The Khadi production, which was of Rs. 879.98 crore in the year 2014-15, has gone to Rs. 1902 crore in 2018-19, which is a growth of more than 100 per cent. Similarly, the Khadi sale was Rs. 1310.9 crore in year 2014-15 and has gone to Rs. 3215.13 crore in 2018-19, recording a growth of over 145 per cent. Khadi and Village Industries' products' turnover has reached to Rs. 74,323 crore in 2018-19.

Not only that, the Village Industries' turnover too reached to Rs. 71,123.68 crore in 2018-19 with respect to turnover of Rs. 31,965.52 crore in 2014-15, with a growth rate of 123 per cent. Khadi has made an average jump of 62 per cent in Khadi fabric production in the last five years, i.e., from 103.22 million square meters in 2014-15 to 170.80 million square meters in 2018-19. In the fiscal 2014-15, the share of Khadi in overall Textile production was 4.23 per cent, which in the year 2018-19 has gone up to 8.49 per cent, which is almost the double. And, this growth could be the best manifestation of Gandhi's doctrine of Swadeshi.

In the last five years, several artisan-centric programmes were launched following the Prime Minister's call of 'Khadi for Economic Transformation'. During this, the KVIC provided more than 32,000 New Model Charkhas and 5,600 modern looms, which has increased the Khadi production substantially. Not only that, nearly 400 new Khadi institutions have been added along with over 40,000 new Khadi artisans. The KVIC has also created employment through Khadi in the remotest part of the country such as Leh, Ladakh, Kaziranga forest, Sunderban in West

“By patronizing foreign cloth we have committed a deep sin. We have condoned an occupation which in point of importance is second only to agriculture, and we are face to face with a total disruption of a calling to which Kabir was born and which he adorned. One meaning of the swadeshi vow suggested by me is that in taking it we desire to do penance for our sins, that we desire to resuscitate the almost lost art of hand-weaving, and that we are determined to save our Hindustan crores of rupees which go out of it annually in exchange for the cloth we receive.”

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Bengal etc. For the first time, Khadi brought major textile corporates in Khadi sector for its marketing, which has increased Khadi sale by manifold. KVIC also brought major PSUs in the Khadi fold, for purchasing Khadi gift coupons for their employees – which has given the business of over Rs. 100 crore. E-marketing through e-wallets, Shop'nShop and approaching Universities, Colleges, Schools, Municipal Bodies etc. for adopting Khadi Uniforms and ceremonial gowns for promotion of Khadi, has increased the reach of Khadi among the young generation and made it buyer-friendly. The introduction of new trendy designs such as Westernwear for women, Jacket, Kurta, Vichar Vastra and other innovative products, with high-quality stitching, has changed the image of Khadi.

In the village industry sector – to cater the economic needs of poorest of the poor and the last man left in the society – which was the axiom of Gandhian Swadeshi, new schemes such as Honey Mission, Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana, Leather Artisans Development Scheme etc. were launched for the benefit of farmers, Adivasis, SC/ST and marginalised communities of potters and cobblers. Under Honey Mission, a record 1.15 lakh Bee-Boxes were distributed across the country to mostly farmers, Adivasis and unemployed youths and created more

than 12,000 jobs. To bring the deviated youths and fatigued farmers to the mainstream of development radar, at Kupwara in Jammu & Kashmir, KVIC distributed as many as 2,300 Bee-Boxes in a single day and created World Record, in collaboration with the Indian Army. Similarly, under Kumhar Sashaktikaran Scheme, 10,000 electric Potter Wheels along with other equipment were given to the potters across the country, which has created 40,000 new jobs and their income has been increased from Rs. 150 per day to Rs. 600 per day. During the ongoing 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, KVIC is all set to distribute another 30,000 electric Potter Wheels among the marginalised potter community. These electric Potter Wheels would ensure production of at least 2 crore kulhads and other terracotta items per day, which would cater the needs of Indian Railways, which had recently ordered to use only terracotta products at 400 major railway stations in the country.

Bapu always loved the marginalised community – whom he called harijan (the loved ones for the God). Following his principles, Khadi has recently launched a programme for the development of another marginalised community of cobblers – polishing and mending shoes and footwears sitting on the footpaths in the scorching sun and shivering westerlies. To give them a social

status, KVIC has rechristened them as charm-chikitsak (Leather-technicians) and set to distribute 70,000 advanced leather tool-kits this year providing proper training.

To remind the glorious memories of Swadeshi, some innovative initiatives have also been undertaken in the recent past. World's Largest Wooden Charkha was installed at IGI Airport Terminal-3 as the grand testimony of Charkha and Gandhian philosophy. KVIC installed monumental grand steel Charkha at Connaught Place along with Charkha Museum, which has emerged as the main attraction of Connaught Place. Similar grand steel Charkhas were installed on the bank of Sabarmati in Ahmedabad and in the heart of Champaran in Bihar.

Gandhiji always believed in Swachhata. Khadi, following his principles, has for the first time successfully developed waste plastic-mixed handmade paper carry bags, which is instrumental in maintaining sanitation as well as reducing the plastic menace from the nature.

Since Gandhian philosophy of Swadeshi has always laid stress on making the balance in eco-system, under the Moringa plantation drive, 46,500 Moringa saplings have already been planted by the KVIC this year, which will not only help the farmers but will also supplement Honey Mission.

Time has come when we should eradicate the contradiction between economic growth and social welfare. We must draft economic policies and programmes oriented towards Mahatma's principles of Swadeshi, which can uplift the economic sustainability of the deprived classes, farmers and women workers.

Sarve bhawantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah!

(May All be Happy, May All be Free from Illness!) ■

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