



## Gandhian thought on Khadi and Rural Development

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**Abstract:** Gandhiji advocates as Khadi stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of the yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery but it dies regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery, for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery Khadi delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses.

**Key words:** was village, self-sufficiency, Grama Swaraj

### Introduction:

The basic theme of Gandhiji's concept was village self-sufficiency or Grama Swaraj. It meant that every village should be self sufficient in two basic requirements – food and clothing. Every member of the family will play the charaka and spin yam. The village weaver will play the loom and produce the cloth necessary for the village. Similarly, the village should produce its own rice, vegetables etc. Food and clothing will not have to be imported in to the villages from out side. Through his speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi always advocated the potential of khadi and village industries to bring about self reliance and prosperity in our villages. To Gandhiji Khadi represented human value and mill cloth material value. As we salute the Father of the Nation on his birth anniversary, it is indeed heartening to note that large number of innovative programmes is in place throughout the country to further

reinforce the values and concepts that were dear to Gandhiji. Recently, different initiatives have been taken both at the centre and states, to further rejuvenate Khadi and cottage industries sector that provides employment opportunities and income to tens of thousands of people across the country.

Over the years, our Khadi and village industries have grown from strength to strength. At present, the sector produces goods worth over Rs.21,675 crore and provides employment to 1.3 crore people annually. Besides this, the sector has considerable export potential. Together with fast increasing domestic demand for Khadi products it has captured international markets like never before. India exports Khadi products to more than 17 countries including all the major developed economy countries.

**Term of Khadi:** The term Khadi is today not just confined to the fabric which has its origin in a hand spun charaka, it has become generic denoting thousands of



products of village industry that are sold at Khadi outlets across the country and also exported.

**Monumental Achievements:** In 1955-56 when the first overall government interventions through various programmes in Khadi and village industries began to bear fruit, the endeavor had resulted in production of goods worth Rs.20 crore and providing employment to 15 lakh persons in the rural region. More than half a century later, the village industries have truly grown by leaps and bounds as it produced goods worth Rs.26,109.08 crore by the end of 2013-14 and providing cumulative employment to 1.30 crore people. The corresponding data for 2014-15 available till December, 2014 shows production to the tune of Rs.21,678.89 and cumulative employment to 1.43 crore persons.

**MSME:** About 45 per cent of the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) are in the rural areas falling in the category of non-form sector. The labor to capital ratio in the MSME sector is much higher than in other industries. The MSME is almost a misnomer as it contributes 9 per cent to the Indian economy, commands a 45 per cent share in the manufacturing output and is responsible for generating 45 per cent exports.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) created as a statutory body under an act of parliament, is focusing on the development of Khadi and Village Industries in rural areas by utilizing local skills, resources and generate employment opportunities at extremely low cost.

**Skill Development:** MSME through KVIC offers various skills development programmes which are aimed to improve

employment opportunity of persons from rural regions. In 2013-14, KVIC has successfully imparted training to 91,500 persons across the country, of which 53,214 were women.

**PMEGP:** Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme (PMEGP) is a credit linked subsidy programme implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission at the national level. It was introduced on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008, by merging two schemes namely PMRY (Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana) and REGP (Rural Employment Generation Programme), for Gauranty of employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in both rural and urban areas. This scheme is implemented by state KVIC, Khadi and Village Industries Board (BVIB) and District Industries Centres (DICs).

**Gandhiji's Views:** Mahatma Gandhi prompted the use of Khadi symbolizing the importance of self-sufficiency in nation building. Xij Jinping, Chinese President, his official visit to India last year, he visited the Sabarmathi Ashram at Ahmedabad in Gujarat and spun the Charkha with great reverence as a mark of respect to Gandhiji. Both Charkha and Khadi had paramount importance in Gandhiji's life, thought and various movements he carried out. Gandhiji himself had described Charkha as the central theme for all his movements during the freedom struggle. In 1934 he wrote "

Khadi is the son of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it.

**Khadi and Swaraj:** Village, the centre of all primary produce, sustenance



, " is the heart of India". In the lie of villages rests the life of India, Gandhiji believed. Hence, he equated Hindu Swaraj, Indian Home rule, with 'Grama Rajya', visualizing villages of free India, Gandhiji stated, " That villages may be regarded as reformed, which has every kind of village industries to produce each of her requirements.

It is known fact that when Britishers came to India, we were the number one supplier of cotton and silk cloths in the world. Rest of the world was immensely fascinated by the Indian textiles. It is the textile industry of India that made us Sone Ki Chidiya. It was the major source of employment and wealth. It supplemented the agricultural life style of our people. Britishers realized that if they have to capture India, they must destroy our textile industry. Therefore, they introduced mill-produced cloth in India in a much cheaper rate. They also placed many taxes on Indian Industries and Production. Gradually the Indian textile industry collapsed and millions of Indians become unemployed.

Gandhiji was full aware of this very fact and therefore he thought to revive India's cottage industry by promoting Khadi. In 1940 he wrote, " The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the Charakha. The Charakha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and the solace of the widow. It kept villagers from idleness. For the Charakha included all the anterior and posterior industries-ginning, carding,

warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy. The

charakha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self contained.

**Economic Aspects:** Gandhiji started his movement in 1918 for Khadi as relief programme for the poor and masses living in Indian villages. Gradually spinning and weaving was elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and self-government. He visualized that every village shall plant and harvest its own raw-material i.e. cotton for yarn, every woman and man shall engage in spinning and every village shall weave whatever is needed for its own use. It is fact that now-a-days farmers have not enough work to earn their living throughout the year. Spinning would thereby not only provide occupation but it also fulfils one of the basic needs (food, cloth and shelter) of human beings.

Gandhiji dreamt that every household would do spinning for their own use as they cook food for themselves. He wrote in 1921, " Charaka is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and therefore freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of good will and self-help. Gandhiji never supported the idea of Indian mills replacing the foreign mills. The 'Swadeshi' concept of Gandhiji spreads the decentralization of economic system. Khadi was its brand ambassador.

Instead of developing heavy industries, India in the past had developed only agriculture based cottage industries which provided entrepreneurship for the masses. Gandhiji too was promoting that idea by promoting Khadi. That is why he symbolised



Khadi for Swaraj. " The mission fo Khadi is not merely to supply the towns people with fashionable Khadi that will vie with the mill manufacturers and thus like other industries supply a few artisans with employment, but it is to become a supplementary industry to agriculture. This mission still remains unfulfilled.

**Skill Development Aspects:** Gandhiji always emphasized that for betterment of human kind decentralized and self-sustainable village economy must be encouraged. Whenever he spoke about Khadi he meant that it must be consumed where it is produced. Now-a-days this formula is known as zero mile theory. Gandhiji never wanted to make Khadi a luxury as it has become today. In fact he wanted that it must be like free as an individual has to produce his own requirement. Gandhiji never advocated developing the Khadi industry as a supplier to towns. He wanted to use Khadi as a weapon of skill development. He wanted to train the villagers to produce khadi. To serve the purpose villagers must be trained to produce cotton and for that they must learn to make the form fertile enough for cotton.

Gandhiji wanted to make villages and villagers self-relient. To achieve this goal he started Khadi movement. Khadi symbolises the connection between agriculture and industry. Both requires certain set of skills and Gandhi wanted the villagers must be trained accordingly.

**Civilisational Aspects:** Khadi also symbolizes the Indian concept of civilization. In 1909 Gandhiji had called the English civilization a monstrous civilization. He strongly believed that our civilization is the greatest civilization on earth. He further explained that core of our civilization is simplicity in every walk of life. He symbolized Khadi as a civilization tool. The ' Khadi spirit'

means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures, and if we but cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our country men, what a land this India of ours would be ! And the more I move about the country and the more I see the thing for myself, the richer, the stronger is my faith growing in the capacity of the spinning wheel.

Thus Gandhiji saw Khadi as a symbol of our civilization and by establishing it in our life he was trying to re-establish our ancient civilization. He was well aware of the fact that Britishers are not only looting this country but also destroying its age old civilization. Therefore, he opposed the heavy mechanization, railways, doctors and advocates. He advocated Nature cure throughout his life and opposed modern medicine. Today, we can understand the importance of his ideas, as now-a-days we are suffering from acute shortage of health services in rural areas while new deseases are emerging. Side effects of modern lifestyle are also quite obvious.

**Current Situation:** Presently, India's textile industry is a mix of organized sector with spinning mills and composite units and unorganized sector with power looms, hand looms and garment sectors. The textile industry retains record of the lowest efficiency in energy utilization and is one of the major energy consuming industries. It generates negative externality to environment and human health. India thus would need to focus on appropriate technologies. Interestingly, Gandhiji's Khadi in the present context has potential to become a low and renewable energy using clean technology.

Khadi was recognized as significant part of village industry. Khadi had a emotional hangover because of



Gandhiji and hence the Government of India supported it with subsidy. However, the available data on value in rupee terms show that Khadi lost its importance within 25 years of Independence. By 1970 the share of value of Khadi had come down to 12 per cent from 56 percent in 1960. In 2009-10 the share was mere 3 per cent. The figures suggest that value added by the Khadi workers declined very sharply overtime. This needs to be considered carefully when a proposal for revival is being made. From engineering and economic point, any machine that utilizes solar energy to better energy transformation is feasible and viable. Charaka is a medium that converts solar energy to mechanical energy. Charaka is used by human hands and human beings survives on solar energy. In the process, it saves energy and provides employment.

**Conclusion:** Gandhiji advocates as Khadi stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of the yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery, for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery Khadi delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. Dadabai Nauroji portrayed poverty of Indian population and proved and held the British rule as responsible. R.C.Dutt too showed that exploitation by British and its rule was responsible for Indian situation. Bipin Chandra Paul, Ranadey and Tilak also advocated for native production. Gandhiji reinvented Charaka

and it became a symbol of prosperity and freedom. Swadeshi became not only a mantra, but also dharma for him. His main invention then was to provide work to the hands of thousands and a dignified livelihood. Thus we can see that Khadi was not merely a cloth for Gandhiji. It was a weapon of our freedom struggle, it was a symbol of Swaraj, it was heart of decentralization rural economy and it was also a representative of our ancient civilization. By reviving Khadi Gandhiji actually was trying hard to revive the real swaraj and rural development.

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