
Gandhi's Idea of Khadi and Its Implications

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Abstract: *'Khadi' means any cloth woven on handloom from cotton, silk or woolen hand spun yarn or from combination of any two or all of such yarn. British rule in India gave birth to Khadi at the hands of Gandhiji. Khadi was Gandhi's main weapon in colonial India during the anti-British movement. Gandhiji wanted to make social and economic changes in the country depending on Khadi. He wanted to increase large employment through Khadi to eradicate poverty in our country. Gandhiji wanted to make the villages economically self-sufficient. He stopped using foreign cloth. He wanted to eliminate caste system in our society by believing only in Khadi. He believed that it was possible to bring unity between Hindu and Muslims through Khadi. Gandhiji considered Khadi to be a living dream for women at all walks of life in our country. Gandhiji considered Khadi to be pollution free and eco-friendly. Gandhiji felt that Khadi must have and will continue to play an important role in increasing the wealth of our country.*

Keywords: *Cloth, Industries, Khadi, Spinning, Swadeshi, Untouchability, Unemployment.*

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Introduction

'Khadi' means any cloth woven on handloom from cotton, silk or woolen hand spun yarn or from combination of any two or all of such yarn. It may also be told that khadi is a cloth woven by hand using hand spun yarn only. Natural fibers namely cotton wool and silk are used in spinning and production activities are carried out mainly in rural areas. At present, various industries are covered by khadi sector. These are: - Cotton Khadi, Muslin Khadi, Silk Khadi, Woolen khadi and Polyvastra.

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From the earliest times, spinning wheel or charkha had been plied in Indian homes. The Vedic Aryan also used charkhas. During the Buddhist age also, the charkha continued to be plied. During the reign of Maurya's, there existed a large organization to deal with matters connected with spinning and weaving. The spinners were women who did the work at home in their spare time. The entire process from picking of the raw cotton to carding, slivering, spinning and weaving continued to be an important occupation. The fabrics were known for their exquisite beauty. From the sixteenth century foreign traders had begun to come to India with foreign goods. They tried at their best to destroy the khadi industry in India to capture the large Indian market. Gandhiji conceived Khadi as the best instrument for giving concrete expression to the 'Swadeshi' spirit for making effective the boycott of foreign goods in general and foreign cloth in particular and thus khadi became a symbol of 'non-cooperation' movement.¹

Gandhi introduced many khadi societies in 1920 with a view to give shelter to the freedom fighters believing in non-violence movement. Khadi is the symbol of the freedom movement against the British rules. The rebirth of khadi was occurred by the hands of Gandhiji during our freedom movement. He thought that it was a symbol of his non-violence revolt against the rule and exploitation or the imperialist rulers. Moreover, he thought that it will bring economic freedom and equality among the people and millions of people will get work in khadi. The problem of unemployment will be eliminated, poverty will be eradicated, society will improve, India will move towards the independence. And for that purpose, Gandhiji started using charkha in Bijapur in 1918 and also introduced Sabarmati Ashram by that the charkha got a place in the program of the congress 1921. Gandhiji set up All India Khadi Board in December 1923. In 1925, All India spinners Association of Akhil Bharat Charkha Sangha was formed. In the thirties, Gandhiji turned his attention to other village industries and as a result All India village industries Association was formed. In 1948, Akhil Bharat Seva Sangha took over the activities of AISA and AIVIA. In January in 1953, the Government of India set up All India Khadi & Village Industries Board. In 1956 this was rechristened as Khadi and Village Industries Commission through a special act of the parliament in the year 1956.²

Gandhiji was opposed to the Cloth material of the mill. He stopped the use of foreign or mixed yarn in Sabarmati ashram because it brings very worst situation among the poor people

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and he also suggested to start using of khadi. Gandhiji thought cutting yarn through the machine will not solve any one's poverty problem. So, he puts more emphasis on the wheel. The wheel will provide employment to many people. Men and women can all spin the wheel. Gandhiji said that, 'The mission of khadi is not merely to supply the towns people with fashion able khadi that will vie with the mill manufacture and thus like other industries supply a few artisans with employment, but is to become a supplementary industry to agriculture. This mission still remains unfulfilled. In order that it may fulfill this mission it has to be self- sustained and its use must spread in the villages just as the villagers cook their roti or rice so must they make their own khadi for personal use'.³

II

Farmers will be able to make yarn on a spinning wheel. The reason is that apart from agriculture people can run the government in their spare time. As a result, human poverty will be eradicated. Gandhiji used to say occasionally, 'People ask me why I am khaddar mad. There are seven lakhs of villages a larger number of their village are living in a conditions of semi starvation. There is no employment for them for nearly six months in the years. It is necessary to find for them some supplementary occupation. We must give them an occupation they are used to. Such an occupation is hand spinning, its hands spinning is to be introduced in the villages; it is but natural that we should be expected to wear khaddar. Hence it is that I have become khaddar mad'.

Gandhiji told the Harijans to make a living by spinning on a spinning wheel. He thought that the Harijans could take food and clothes from the poor and helpless. Cutting yarn on a spinning wheel gives benefit to the country and the nation. He tells to the lazy people that they would spin the spinning wheel. Then the financial problems in their family will be solved. Gandhiji was speaking in the context of Harijans, 'Very few people have notion of what khadi means to Harijans. I personally believe that hand giving had carding hand spinning and hand weaving have a brilliant future at least in India. On the other hand, khadi as a village industry requires very little capital. I remain confirmed in my opinion that khadi in India has a very bright future'⁵ Gandhiji believed that by weaving cloth on a spinning wheel millions of people can get

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jobs. It will go one step towards in organizing the country. He suggested to build charkha as a central cooperative organization.

Khadi service is the work of people, who work under the All India Spinners Association the member of this association which is located in Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. If someone eager to join khadi service without having a certificate then they may enter, some preference have been given by the technical department. The technical department provides a monthly scholarship of Rs 12 to those who does the satisfied work for this department.

III

Gandhiji was able to convince his ideology among the Indian people irrespective of my caste, creed and religion in the name of khadi. The rules including exchange of food, water, touch, territorial boundaries, habitation and even clothing. Gandhi's effort to invite all Indian, no matter what their caste, to set aside time for spinning homespun and to wear khadi, was an attempt to bring together minds, hearts, stomachs, and hands to improve the livelihood of all. He represented the trio colors of the Indian national flag as minorities for white Muslim for green and Hindus for red. Gandhiji also religiously motivated to the people for spinning by saying that the true and universal purpose. Hindu, Muslim and other faiths were welcome to participate for experience and to gain the, money from the khadi work. The flag was for Gandhi's living emblem of communal unity and equalizing labor in which all participate. Gandhiji said that the government can give decent jobs millions of unemployed people. He called on women to boycott foreign cloths. He spoke of the use of khadi cloth.

Gandhiji said that, 'I am pained to see several of them clad in foreign cloth. My prayer is that you should boycott foreign cloth and take to khadi. Let there be Ramrajyo in India once more. There can be no Ramrajyo without Sita and I wish to see Sita embodied. Many of sister have set on example by this tremendous sacrifice in this be half and I hope that you will not lag behind then in your goal for khaddar'.⁶ Intended for women he said, 'Here I see some sisters and a few of them are wearing khadi why only a few? Women also should take part in the attainment of swaraj and self- purification like the men, I do not speak of swaraj but of Ramrajyo if there is no Sita there is no Ramrajyo. If you want Ramrajyo all of you should become Sitas. History says

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that Sita wore khaddar and used only national things it is on account of that purity that Ravana could not even touch Sita'.⁷

Gandhiji believed that rich women not wearing khadi cloths; he told them to use khadi cloth. He believed that those who would use khadi as a cloth, will practice the true Dharma (religion). They should do their dharma even as Sita Devi did and if all of them tried to act like Sita, he would tell them Ramrajya would come into existence. If they could not entertain feeling of sympathy and love for their poor brother and sisters of what use was their life to them. He told all the widows to run the wheel; he thought charkha was a friend and support of widow. Gandhiji said in the context of Swaraj, 'I cannot conceive of swaraj without khadi'. He talked khadi to use it like, 'Mantra'. He thinks that khadi is the basis of nationalism. Khadi is one such movement that young women they will be able to make living.

Gandhiji said that, 'I have suggested to the boys and men that they should spin. Thousands of them, I know, are spinning daily. The main burden of spinning must, as of old, fall on your shoulders. Two hundred years ago, the women of India spun not only for home demand but also for foreign lands. They spun not merely coarse counts but the finest that world has ever spun. No machine has yet reached the fineness of the yarn spun by our ancestors. If then we are to cope with the demands for khadi during the two months and afterwards, you must form the spinning clubs, institute spinning competitions and flood the Indian market with handspun yarn. For this purpose, some of you have to become experts in spinning, carding and adjusting the spinning wheels'.⁸

Gandhiji appealed to all for spinning Hindu Muslim unity and removal of untouchability on which their independence rested. Swaraj without khaddar would be for educated men of Bombay but for agriculturalist there could be no swaraj without khaddar. In the year of 1926, he said in speech at Rajkot, "I refer to khaddar and removal of untouchability. These two things are in a manner more important than Hindu Muslim unity for that unity is impossible without them. So long as we have not rid Hindu Muslim of the stain of untouchability it is impossible, it is impossible to achieve real Hindu Muslim unity".⁹ Khadi serves Hindus and Muslims alike. The village will be revived by the khadi. The khadi cares about all classes of people it will take our swaraj forward. He said that, 'I must apply myself to; preparing efficient

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nonviolent self-sacrificing workers with a living faith in hand spinning and khaddar, Hindu, Muslim unity and they are Hindus in removal of untouchability also. For the current years at any rate this is the national programme and no other'. And also said that 'If the people fulfilled the three conditions laid down by him. Hindu, Muslim unity, khaddar and spinning and removal of untouchability India would surely advance towards her goal' ¹⁰

IV

Gandhiji said in his various speeches in different places that people do not use foreign cloths. He believed that using foreign cloth would ruin the industry of the country. There will be financial loss of the country. The independence of the country will be delayed. Unemployment in the country will not go away. So, he insisted on the use of khadi. Because he believes khadi could solve their problems. He told the salesmen to go door to door and highlighted the need of khadi. Gandhiji considered the use of khadi as a national symbol. Elimination of foreign cloths and use of cloths made of native khadi. It was a protest against the British government. So, he says, 'There is no fear or India Swadeshi be coming impure or racial so long as it confines itself principally to khaddar and things which can be should be manufactured in India. It is not exclusive but conservative. It is not anti-British or anti foreign but pro-Indian by necessity. India must be protecting her primary industries even as a mother protect her children against the whole without being hostile to it. Violent nationalism otherwise known as imperialism is the course. Non –violent nationalism or civilized life'.¹¹

In Gandhi's view khadi is to serve the people. Khadi serves the working class and the mill cloth absorbs them, wearing khadi cloths, their work survives. He believed that if we use our own country cloths then the Swadeshi movement will be supported. He said that, 'we took Swadeshi to mean cloth produced in our country. This was the first stage. Then we realized that foreign yarn woven into cloth in India was not Swadeshi and would benefit the country in but an insignificant measure. Now arriving at the fourth stage we seen to have learnt that Swadeshi means khadi woven by hand from hand spun yarn. Everything else is false and useless. Khadi means the spinning –wheel how can we ever have without khadi? Like swaraj khadi is our birth right and it is our life long duty to use that only'.¹²

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Gandhi speech in Surat about khadi and swaraj, 'I have been shouting repeatedly that boycott is impossible without khadi. You could practice boycott with the help of khadi and the textile mills. But it is impossible to day to carry on boycott depending on mills alone'.¹³ And Gandhiji further said that the question, why can khadi help us to win Swaraj? His answer was, 'Because, over three quarters of Indians population are under employed and underfed agriculturist and khadi can give them work and food. Because one of England's chief reasons for holding India in subjection is that she finds in India finest market for her cotton cloth and khadi can put amend to that market'. He was asked another question, why can khadi help to win swaraj better than Indian mill cloth? He said that, 'Because khadi can give supplementary work to the cores of distressed agriculturist who must not leave their land and therefore cannot go to work in mills. Because, cotton mills could never give sufficient work relive the vast masses of the unemployed. Because the production of khadi can be quickly organized on an enormous scale at very small cost, whereas to substantially increase the mills would mean enormous expenditure and delay of many years'¹⁴

Gandhiji believed that a silent revolution will come to the villages of India through the wheels and khadi. Gandhiji said that Harijan magazine, 'It (charkha) brings about a silent and sure revolution like the silent but sure and life-giving revolution of the charkha". Gandhiji himself used to run charkha for half an hour every day. Gandhiji initiated the program of introducing charkha in the congress conference in 1921. He said that, 'for foreign cloth has ruined millions of homes and taken away from millions of women an employment which sustained them. Foreign cloth has ruined seven lakhs village in India. While on the one hand women have lost employment on the other they have to pay for cloth which they could have produced in their own villages'.¹⁵ Gandhiji asked the members of the congress party to wear clothes for Khadi's Campaign and talk about the spinning of Khadi. He traveled in different part of country to spread Khadi. Not only in Bengal but also in Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra etc. In a conference of National Congress at Belgaon in 1924 Gandhi told for constrictive work, Specially Khadi.

V

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The use of charkha and khadi was very important in the Swadeshi movement. The women of the village used to operate the charkha. Women used to earn money by running this spinning wheel, and took care of the family. Gandhiji wanted all men and women old and young to support on the Swadeshi movement. He believed that in this way the national movement can be awakened. He said, 'Just as every one of us must eat and drink and cloths himself, even no every one of us must spin himself'.¹⁶ And he also said that, 'I would impose a prohibitive tariff on all foreign cloth so as to exclude it entirely from India and bring khaddar under state control, so as to enable every villager who chooses to spin feel that the products of his or her spinning wheel would be taken up'.¹⁷ Gandhiji spoke about the importance of khadi for students. Because he believed that the importance of khadi to the society would increase a lot if the students came forward in this regard. So, he participated in student meetings. His Speech at a student rally in Lahore July in 1934. Gandhiji said that, 'I have told the boys and I say some things to you devote the time you can spare from studies in the service of the Harijans. In this way so much work can be accomplished. You can help a great deal in the work for the abolition of untouchability. Khaddar you must adopt. Along with it be proficient in the art of spinning. Do devote your spare time in the service of the Harijans and in spinning. You should always wear only khadi'.¹⁸ A women volunteers who is aware of this situation, while pleading for boycott will insist upon the use of khadi and never ask the people to use mill made cloth. Gandhiji said, 'I do not mean to suggest that one should give up one's students and devote oneself immediately to khadi work. I suggested that a student who has courage, strength and faith should take a vow from today on wards that he will become a khadi worker which he has finished his studies. If he makes this resolve one can consider that his service in the cause of khadi has already began, because he will then choose whatever he decides the object of acquiring the necessary capacity for this particular type of work'.¹⁹ Gandhiji believe that, 'The object of khaddar was to help the starving peasant and workers who would obtain the full benefit of their labor if khadi was encouraged, while in the mill cloth, they would receive only one anna in the rupee. To help the humanitarian case they must wear khaddar'.²⁰ Gandhiji said while discussing about khadi, 'People asked me why I am khaddar mad. There are seven lakhs of villagers. A large number of these villages are living in a condition of semi starvation. There is no employment for them for nearly six months in a year. It

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is necessary to find for than some supplementary occupation. We must give them an occupation they are used to. Such occupation is hand spinning. If that we should be expected to wear khaddar. Hence it is that I have become khaddar-mad.²¹ Gandhiji used to say, 'For those who believe in khadi it is not a dress to be worn only on certain occasions, not a uniform, but something which should be habitually worn. Swaraj cannot be secured or the poverty of the starving masses cannot be removed by a few persons wearing khadi on certain occasions'.²²

Conclusion

Gandhiji believe that Boycott of foreign cloth, and therefore is the center of our boycott program. This central boycott cannot succeed until we universalize khaddar. We cannot universalize khaddar without Hindu Muslim unity without removing untouchability. Gandhiji believed that the production of khadi will help together the workless people and those farmers who spend most of their times doing nothing except the seasonal farming work. Somewhat clothes problem will be solved. By this old cottage industry will go towards modernization. Gandhi also believed that this cottage industry will lead lot towards India's freedom struggle. So, it is clear that Gandhiji has thought towards charkha and khadi that was very admirable. Mahatma Gandhi used refer to khadi as the liberty or freedom. Commercially this pollution free and eco-friendly khadi had played an incredible role inside and outside even after its century. Khadi has not only increased family employment, it has contributed to increase national income.

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