



Gandhian views on Khadi and Indian Freedom Movement

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi advocated the wearing of Khadi cloth through spinning. He made the use of Khadi as the livery of Indian freedom. This paper examines the implications behind the introduction of Khadi & the supplementary connotation after its introduction. According to Mahatma Gandhi the spinning wheel represented the hope of masses, the Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers & gave them dignity, self reliance & self confidence. It was the friend & solace of the helpless villagers especially women. It was an honor for the Satyagraha follower, a supporter for the farmer. The Khadi according to him was not a cloth it was a faith of tolerance, patience & toil. He said it kept the villagers away from idleness & redundancy. It helped the villagers to attain gram Swaraj & it made them self contained & self reliant. It symbolized the Swaraj ideal because it was the Swadeshi reply to mill made goods of England filling the Indian markets.

key words: Khadi, opportunity, self-discipline, Swaraj, Swadeshi, Satyagraha,

"Like Swaraj, Khadi is our birth-right, and it is our life-long duty to use that only. Anyone who does not fulfill that duty is totally ignorant of what Swaraj is." (Navajivan, 5-3-1922; 23:11)

Introduction

Khadi was introduced in 1920 as a supporting weapon of Satyagraha and as the best instrument for providing concrete expression to the Swadeshi spirit to boycott foreign goods. Khadi rendered an opportunity to every man, woman and child to cultivate self-discipline and self-sacrifice as a part of the non-cooperation movement. Spinning

and weaving was elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and self government.

Thus according to Mahatma Gandhi Khadi is not mere a piece of cloth but a way of life. Khadi was made the central core of the constructive activities. Mahatma Gandhi saw it as the end of dependency on foreign materials symbolizing foreign rule and thus giving a first lesson or real independence. Mahatma Gandhi hoped for a certain bond of unity between the classes and



masses by bridging the gap with a common occupation, and he saw great social value in hand-spinning. (Kumarappa, B. -Gandhiji's Autobiography, Pub. Navajan, Ahmadabad pp 22-89)

Mahatma Gandhi presented Khadi as a symbol of nationalism, equality and self-reliance. It was his belief that reconstruction of the society and effective Satyagraha against the foreign rule can be possible only through Khadi. It clearly displayed that through employing a fresh and imaginative approach, how an idea, determinedly pursued, can become a movement.

The Khadi Movement worked with the twin intent of shaking the British economy on the one hand and boosting the Indian economy on the other. The movement was absolutely visualized to improve the farmer folk. (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka Volume II pp 1-22).

The Gandhian economic policies of Khadi gained strength after the Belgaum National Congress session in 1924. In his presidential address Mahatma Gandhiji spoke on the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity, boycott of foreign goods, encouraging spinning and weaving of Khadi, working towards eradication of untouchability and other issues. "I am convinced that Swaraj cannot come so long as the tens of millions of our brothers and sisters do not take to the charkha, do not spin, do not make Khadi and wear it" opined Mahatma Gandhi. (Kumarappa, B. -Gandhiji's

Autobiography, Pub. Navajan, Ahmadabad)

1. The spread of Khadi and village industries was taken up all over India. There was a sporadic Khadi movement.
2. The Congress party in particular set a model for others by establishing Khadi centers as a promotional supplement to Swadeshi movement.
3. All People understood the value of spinning and weaving Khadi in the scheme of rural development and often cooperated with the Congress workers in the extension of Khadi industries and other village industries sponsored by the Congress. (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka Volume II pp 1-92).
4. The economic argument in favor of Khadi was taken up individuals on a war footing. (Kumarappa, B. -Gandhiji's Autobiography, Pub. Navajan, Ahmadabad pp 34 -38)
5. Newspapers & leaders voted for Khadi inception in their speeches & made it clear that only self reliance through Khadi & charkha could alleviate Indian masses out of poverty.
6. This economic fallout drive motivated the formation of community-based social welfare organisations to help those within the community to cope up with their new economic situation.



7. The society awakened itself towards basic needs such as literacy basic education , hygiene & health.
8. The organizations for Harijan welfare were set up in many places of the Karnataka region , princely state of Mysore in particular & India in general. (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka Volume II pp 19-22)
9. The movement, in the characteristic Gandhian mode, was completely non-violent in approach.(Dalton, Dennis, ed. (1996) Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Hackett Publishing pp 17-32)

The Khadi Campaign

Mahatma Gandhi undertook the Khadi campaign tour in 1927. It soon became wide spread & became movement. The Khadi movement aimed at boycotting foreign goods and promoting Indian goods, thereby improving India's economy. (Low, D. A., ed. (2006). Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917 – 47. Oxford University Press pp 22-45)

Mahatma Gandhi wrote in young India that charkha is the symbol of the nation's prosperity & therefore freedom It is the symbol of not commercial war but commercial peace. (Mahatma Gandhi in Young India 08-12-1921)

Mahatma Gandhi began promoting the spinning of Khadi or rural self-employment and self-reliance instead of using cloth manufactured industrially in Britain in 1920s .Indian freedom fighters

were making Khadi as an integral part and icon of the freedom movement . (Low, D. A., ed. (2006). Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917 – 47. Oxford University Press pp 1-22)

This revolved around the use of Khadi fabrics as a means of promotion of Swadeshi movement against the dumping of foreign-made clothes. Thus it symbolized the political ideas and independence itself Khadi, the fabric that successfully transcended its commodity status to become a political symbol.

1. The simplicity as advocated through the Khadi Movement by Mahatma Gandhi can be subversive and revolutionary.
2. Mahatma Gandhi said the wearing of Khadi replaces the conventional idea of wearing clothes for ornament purpose (Mahatma Gandhi Young India 07-08-1924).
3. Mahatma Gandhi opined in Young India that if we have the Khadi spirit in us we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life the Khadi spirit means illimitable patience for those who know anything about the production of Khadi know how patiently the spinners & the weavers have to toil at their treelike that we should have to toil with patience in spinning the thread of Swaraj (Mahatma Gandhi Young India dated 22-09-1927). Thus Khadi



acquired emblematic status during India's freedom struggle.

4. Mahatma Gandhi, largely acknowledged as the one who pioneered the fabric and invested it with symbolism, saw Khadi as heralding real freedom to the millions of poor and marginalized Indians.
5. Khadi was not just a symbol; it was a massive exercise in organisational establishment, in forging networks, brand-building, and ideological investment.
6. Mahatma Gandhi said Khadi delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich & creates a moral & spiritual bond between the classes & the masses It restores to the poor what the rich have taken from them (Mahatma Gandhi in Young India dated 17-03-1927).
7. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in young India paper that "the wearer of Khadi from a Swadeshi standpoint is like a man making use of his lungs a natural & obligatory act has got to be performed whether others do it out of impure motives or refrain altogether because they do not believe in its necessity or utility".((Mahatma Gandhi - Young India)
8. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in Harijan paper that Khadi is the sun of the village solar system it

helps them to occupy the spare time profitably.(Mahatma Gandhi -Harijan paper dated 16-11-1934)

9. Mahatma Gandhi said that the mission of Khadi is not merely to supply the town people with fashionable Khadi that vie with the mill manufactures but it's the supplementary industry to agriculture (Mahatma Gandhi in Harijan dated 06-07-1935)
10. A country remains poor in wealth both materially & intellectually if it does not develop its handicrafts & its industries & lives in a lazy parasitic life by importing all the (Young India Dated 20-08 1931).
11. He said India must be strong enough to resist the western industrial onslaught for her own sake and that of the world. (Young India Dated 07-10-1926)

Conclusion

Gandhi envisioned Indian cultural heritage through Khadi. For him it was symbol of simplicity, endurance, fortitude, serenity & hard work. According to him Khadi was not just a symbol; it was a massive exercise in organizational establishment, in counterfeiting allied village networks, supplemental in brand-building, and a supreme ideological investment.

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