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Social life of Mahatma Gandhi with experiment of Khadi: An overview

Dr. B Poornima Sethupathi

Assistant Professor in History, Fatima College (Autonomous), Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

* Corresponding Author: **Dr. B Poornima Sethupathi**

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Abstract

This paper tries to present the social life and thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as an origin of alternative development and experiment with Khadi spirit. The first section of the paper provides Gandhi's criticism of modern civilization, that of economics and that of Marxist socialism and communism. The second section analyzes his ideas for a "post-modern" construction of India, where his views on Swadeshi (self-reliance), his theory of trusteeship (theory of class and distribution) and his images of an ideal village economy are examined during Pre and post Independence period.

Keywords: Khadi, Ideology, Swadeshi, Nationalist, Independence

Introduction

Gandhiji 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. Khadi is the central core of the constructive activities as recommended by him. According to him there could be no swaraj without universal and voluntary acceptance of khadi. In his words, "I am a salesman of swaraj. I am a devotee of khadi. It is my duty to induce people, by every honest means, to wear khadi." Gandhiji started his movement for khadi in 1918. His emphasis at first was on khadi as providing relief to our poverty-stricken masses. But one finds a change in his emphasis from 1934, more especially from 1935, when he began on insisting on khadi for the villager's own use, rather than merely for sale to others.

His imprisonment in 1942 and 1943 gave him time to ponder further over his khadi movement, and when he came out of jail he came with a determination to give a new turn to khadi work in order to make khadi serve the needs of villagers themselves first and foremost. He poured out his soul to his fellow-workers in 1944, and urged them to effect the change. The spinning wheel was at one time the symbol of India's poverty and backwardness. Gandhiji turned it into a symbol of self-reliance and non-violence. Khadi enabled him to carry his message of swadeshi and swaraj to the people and to establish connection with them. In the Mahatma's own words recorded in the Young India dated 22nd September 1927,

“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 and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patience while we are spinning 'the thread of Swaraj'. The 'khadi spirit' means also an equally illimitable faith. Even as the spinner toiling away at the yarn he spins by itself small enough, put in the aggregate, would be enough to clothe every human being in India, so must we have illimitable faith in truth and non-violence ultimately conquering every obstacle in our way.

Objectives met

- To study the historical significance of Mahatma Gandhiji.
- To find out the improvement of Khadi during pre and post-independence period.

Khadi Programme for Economic and Social reasons:

Initially, Gandhiji took up the khadi programme for economic and social reasons. During his tour to acquaint himself with the realities of Indian conditions, he was deeply distressed by the increasing starvation of the villages and widespread underemployment, specially unemployment of those engaged in agriculture. He came to the conclusion that the charka was the only solution to overcome their miserable situation. Charkha aims at putting this vast human resources to productive use which is otherwise going waste. Charkha as machine and human hand as mechanical Energy. An important aspects of khadi upon which Gandhiji insisted was self-sufficiency of individuals, specially producers as well as the villages.

- Gandhi Ji said **“We must penetrate the spinner’s home and induce her to wear khadi made from her own yarn”**

Gandhian Khadi-(Pre-Independence)

Mahatma Gandhi is not only the Father of Nation, but also the father of modern “Khadi”. He realized the importance of ‘Charkha’ (Spinning wheel) in London in 1908 during discussions with fellow Indians regarding the conditions in India. When he finally came to India in 1915 Boycott of foreign goods, especially English cloth and Swadeshi movement was going on and he claimed that his khadi programme gave a concrete and positive meaning to Swadeshi. In 1919 he formally launched the Khadi programme in the country. The first khadi production centre was established in Kathiawad, Gujarat in 1921. In 1925 an independent autonomous body called All India Spinners Association (AISA) or Akhil Bharatiya Charkha Sangha was formed for implenting khadi programme vigorously throughout India.

In proposing the khadi programme he said

“Every revolution of wheel spins peace, goodwill and love”

Khadi in Post –Independent India

Formation of All India Khadi & Village industries Board and Khadi and Village Industries Commission In August 1948 the Government of India came out with its industrial policy for the first time in free India, which did make reference to the role of cottage and village industries including khadi in providing subsidiary occupation to the rural people. The congress Agrarian Reforms Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr.J.C.Kumarappa Which suggested guidelines for the development of Khadi and village industries(KVI) sector. As a result the central government constituted under Industry Ministry, the All India and Village Industries Board (AIKVIB) in January 1953. Later to remove procedural handicaps and financial difficulties experienced by the Board. It was replaced by an autonomous statutory body called Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) constituted under an Act of Parliament with effect from April 1st, 1957. KVIC was charged with the

responsibility to plan, organize and implement the programme of promoting and developing khadi and village industries.

After becoming an independent nation, India moved confidently. The government and private donors began to donate resources to build infrastructure. New ambitious buildings were commissioned and built. Schools and educational facilities that focused on disciplines like design, management, scientific research, and engineering were developed. As cities began to expand debates started to arise on the effects on Indian culture and the best model for international growth. Along with this movement towards a new modern India, the textile industry saw a shift from handspun handwoven handicrafts to power loom made textiles. During this time, the textile industry would experiment and play with how they made fabrics. They were also trying out new fiber technologies. Investments were made into initiatives to revitalize rural economies and artisans. The government created programs that lead to the emergence of private entrepreneurship in garment manufacturing, home furnishings, and lifestyle companies and brands. India began to look outward to exports, with heavy influence on European design needs. And, with that goal in mind textiles saw a shift towards mass-produced West-centric Modernism marked by geometry, abstraction, and colour.

The Modernism movement pushed Indian textiles into an age of rapid mass production made possible by new technologies. Today in the 21st century, this period's influence relevant. And, the companies formed during this time grew into some of India's largest international conglomerates that are still operating today. Khadi, which was once a fabric for all of India, instead, today, is a representation of the finest Luxuries. Craftsmen are now spinning khadis with silk, wool, and other modern synthetic fibers like modal have become popular because of market demand. Khadi fabric is expensive. Today, the people that are the ones weaving it are not able to afford it themselves. They must resort to wearing cheaper mass produced power loom fabrics. The push to reestablish the traditional handloom and khadi industry has been met by both accolades and criticism. At the root of the argument, we must first identify the difference between the crafts person, designer, and artist. As India continues to evolve so does the role of crafts person, designer, and artist. With the introduction of design education into Indian curriculums in the 1960s, the art of design became the main focus in textiles. Historically, the design component has been a way to add value to the craft aspect of weavings technical know-how.

Strength of Khadi sector

- The cotton khadi industry seems to be eminently suited to make a small but important contribution in accomplishing the gigantic task of findings gainful employment for crores of unemployed in the rural areas.
- Fulfils one of the three basic human needs cloth and it has vast scope of expansion with the increase in population.
- It is an universal industry, which can easily be started in most parts of our country with modest organizational set-up.
- Almost all the spinners in khadi, are women. Similarly, some of the weavers and most of the weaver’s assistants also are women.

- In short, it is an environment protecting industry suiting the rural ethos.
- Thus khadi activities discourage exodus of the rural population to urban areas in search of employment, which results in disastrous deterioration of the environment in towns and cities through growth of slums and sub – human living conditions.

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Conclusion

At the time of freedom movement, it became popular as a symbol of those who believed in Gandhian philosophy. Gandhi's khadi campaign was a part of the national regeneration agenda that had come to be called 'constructive work' as distinguished from the 'political work' of the Congress. The following lines were hummed by people on a large scale and it underlines the importance of khadi economics and the feeling of patriotism. Khadi was a people's movement. The people's movement seldom yields the targeted results. By its very nature, the people's movement as a rule is ranged against an established authority. The cause of the movement is generally either the insensitive misdemeanor on the part of the ruling caucus, or infringement of the given rights of the populace or perceived wrongs committed by the authority. Through khadi Gandhi was neither opposing nor was he involved in a protracted struggle against colonial regime, but was attempting to establish a communication with his countrymen in a space autonomous from that of the government.

Today, it still cherishes this distinction. Since it has traditionally been associated with a simple and austere lifestyle, and serves to uplift the poor, its use indicates the values you cherish. 'Khadi Spirit' is all about simplicity in all walks of life. It indicates endless patience. Those who spin and weave understand how patient one has to be to toil at these trades. Industries. Our dependence on imported items decrease. We become more conscious of using 'Swadeshi' (domestically manufactured) items helping us to move towards self-reliant economy. Trends are changing again now. Khadi has emerged as a fashion statement, and is rapidly gaining ground with the glamour industry of India and abroad.

Suggestion to Improve Khadi Spirit

- In schools involving students particularly for spinning on charka.
- In villages in the form of cluster activity.
- In the form of clusters of cotton growing farmers and self-help groups.
- Under REGP (Rural employment generation programme) scheme.

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