

APPENDIX-I

A NOTE ON HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KHADI (1920-1953)

Preface

Before getting to know the historical background of Khadi we must try to understand the situation in India in 1920 and why Mahatma Gandhi gave more stress on it is to be seen.

Before the industrial revolution, cottage industry was dominant in India. Because of industrial revolution and British regime the importance of machine increased and in effect cottage industry and craftsmanship had lost their importance and identity before 1920. Thus spinning and weaving mills dominated the market in cloth.

In 17th and 18th centuries, England used to import cotton fabrics like Dacca Malmal from India. But in the 19th century India started importing Manchester cloth. The effect was poverty and unemployment.

Gandhi's Concept of Khadi

(To arouse the sense of patriotism among the countrymen Gandhiji strove hard choosing different measures.) The most forceful of the measures was to make the Indian people wear the cloth produced in India and to utilise the local resources. This, he termed as Swadeshi feeling.

Now let us see in detail, how Mahatma Gandhi achieved his objectives. Following are the three aspects, due to which Gandhiji gave more stress on Khadi.

1. Economic Aspect

India is a predominantly agricultural country. Agriculture mainly depends upon monsoon. This necessitated another source of livelihood for the people. So, Gandhiji's choice automatically fell on Khadi.

This he chose because of the way in which it could be easily produced, both by youngsters and grown ups as well. The spinning could be done by children, men and women, literate and illiterate alike. One could spin at home or outside during the leisure hours. Further, minimum of capital is required for the same. Clothing is one of the primary needs of an individual. By producing Khadi at home, the individual could provide clothing for himself and could also earn by selling the same. The other cottage industries are the needs of the village or a particular section whereas Khadi is the need of each and every individual. Among the cottage industries, Khadi industry has a place of prime importance.

2. The Moral and Social Aspects

The desired qualities like self-sufficiency, self-confidence, development of the feeling of co-operation, social integrity etc.

are developed by Khadi. It fills in the leisure of the villagers in a useful way. Gandhiji says that Khadi is the life-blood of the individuals.

3. Concept of Science

In India due to unemployment problem, manual labour is stressed. Machine is to be utilised only in such cases where man cannot use his hands. Science and machine are meant for man and not vice versa. The knowledge of science means the knowledge of nature. Along with the economic prosperity, the development of the human mind is equally essential. So long as there are no other means of employment, the spinning wheel should be accepted as the source of employment. Gandhiji wanted to inculcate among the people the importance of Swadeshi and liberty. To produce the things of primary needs by utilising the available resources and import only if this is not possible.

In brief, Khadi is an effective tool for socio-economic regeneration of the Indian economy than as an industrial activity or tool of freedom.

OBJECTS OF KHADI

After having seen three aspects regarding the concepts of Khadi, let us see the objectives of Khadi. The following are the

objectives of Khadi:

1. To provide full/part time employment to the spinners and weavers,
2. To provide real income to the labourers,
3. To enable the people to be self-sufficient through Khadi,
4. All round development of villages through Khadi.
5. To secure freedom by initiating non-violence movement through Khadi.

Here two objections are being raised against Khadi:

1. Khadi is costly,
2. Quality of Khadi is inferior.

But these objections are not at all appealing. May be, in one sense Khadi is costly, but we must consider the other benefits of Khadi, e.g., health, comfort etc. It is possible to improve quality of Khadi as per the demands of people. Therefore the production of Khadi should be continued so long as there is acute unemployment problem, even afterwards.

Now let us consider the development of Khadi from 1920 to 1956 at all India level.

[A] Pre-Independence Period (1920-1947)

(a) Inception of Khadi

After 1894, Mahatma Gandhi had been seriously thinking about

disadvantages of machine and comparative advantage of cottage industry, this later as a tool of the freedom of the countrymen. In accordance with these thoughts, in 1908, taking into consideration the situation in India, the idea of spinning wheel struck Gandhiji's mind when he was in England. In the beginning, spinning wheel was misconceived to be loom. In the year 1915, Gandhiji returned from South Africa and began to use the mill yarn on the handloom. After that he could distinguish between the loom and spinning wheel and then he discovered the traditional spinning wheel, i.e., Charkha. This traditional spinning wheel was searched out and brought by Smt. Gangaben from Vijapur near Ahmedabad. Now Gandhiji thought it improper to rely on the yarn produced in Shri Umakhobani's mill. During the years 1916-1919 Gandhiji began the production of cloth by hand-spinning and hand-weaving in Sabarmati Ashram. They also started a training centre in the production of Khadi. Since then the production of Khadi began in the real sense of the term.

(b) Khadi Movement (1920-1925)

Khadi was revived after 1920. In 1919, at Amritsar Congress, stress was laid on Khadi. It gained the importance as there was total boycott on imported cloth. The all-India Village Association was established in 1923. Shri Jammalal Bajaj was the first President of this Association. At this time only Mahatma Gandhi separated the political movement and constructive work.

Consequently, he established Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh in 1925 and the Indian Village Association was merged into Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh.

(c) Establishment of All India Khadi School

From the year 1925, stress was laid on sales of Khadi and its publicity, for giving systematic training in Khadi production. All India Khadi School was established at Sabarmati in 1922. Khadi Karyakartas from different parts of the country came here for training. Shri Maganlal Gandhi started technical research centre in Khadi products near Ahmedabad.

(d) Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh

We have already seen that Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh was established in the year 1925 with its head office at Ahmedabad. Khadi was so important to Mahatma Gandhi that he got himself freed of the other institutions, but continued to be the President of Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh upto 1948. Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh carried on its work through its provincial regional offices and its branches spread out all over India. Due to Gandhi's leadership and freedom movement, Khadi found its publicity all over India. The Khadi activities were prominent in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarath. In a sense Khadi was a barometer of national aspiration.

The Objectives of Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh

- (1) To provide employment through hand spinning and hand weaving,
- (2) To enable the people to overpower unemployment, drought and unforeseen calamities.
- (3) To provide education and medical treatment to the masses,
- (4) To give training of spinning and weaving to all.

The above mentioned are the objects of Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh.

(c) Khadi Movement (1930-1940)

When the Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh came into being, the spinner was given six Paise (10 naye Paise) per day as the wages. This was not all enough to make both ends meet for the spinners. So, the Sangh thought to increase the same to eight annas (20 Paise) which was at the same time not practicable. Further, the price of Khadi had to be increased, the effect of which was that people would not have bought Khadi. Therefore, it was increased three to four annas per day. In spite of this, Khadi could not be sold at cheaper rate and sales decreased. Even then the Sangh aimed at providing proper wages to the spinners and not to sell Khadi in loss.

Till 1935, the aim was to provide employment for the people. But after 1935, the outlook changed. Khadi became the means of livelihood. The Sangh wanted to provide maximum possible wages to the artisans. After 1937 the provincial Congress Ministry promised to give financial help to Khadi. But because of the war the Ministry had to resign and prices of all the commodities increased except those of Khadi. Consequently Khadi sales increased. The British Government could not tolerate this, as such imposed so many restrictions on Khadi. The result was, so many institutions had to be closed down. But Khadi was to appear again on the scene, because Mahatma Gandhi, along with others, began to reconsider the situation and thus Khadi regained its importance.

(f) Decentralisation of Khadi: (Revolutionary Step)

During the year 1944-45, Mahatma Gandhi, after having considered all the events, put forth the thought of decentralisation of Khadi. In his well-known book 'Naya Mode' (Nava Sanskaran), he proposed the same. After Independence Vinoba Bhave put forth the same ideas. But these ideas were not accepted by the Khadi Karyakartas, though it was accepted in some measure by Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

(g) Establishment of Akhil Bharatiya Serva Seva Sangh

From 1944 to 1947 Mahatma Gandhi and the other leaders

concentrated their attention on securing freedom for the country. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in 1948. Akhil Bharatiya Serva Seva Sangh was established in the same year. The other organisations merged into this Seva Sangh except Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh. The objects of Serva Seva Sangh and Charakha Sangh were different.

[B] Post-Independence Period - 1948-1953

After independence some people felt that Khadi had lost its importance. Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that it was not so. It was his firm statement that Khadi had helped the poor people. He strongly asserted that Khadi would continue to be the source of employment and a means of self-sufficiency. He looked at Khadi as an effective tool for socio-economic regeneration for the Indian economy than as a mere industrial activity or a tool of freedom. This idea was not acceptable to the people after 1950. The Government of India gave more stress on industrialisation. The leadership of Khadi had been shifted on the shoulders of Vinobaji. The new leadership had great impact and in 1953 the Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh was merged into Akhil Bharatiya Serva Seva Sangh.

On 14th January 1953 the Khadi and Village Industries Board was established by the Government of India.

This is in brief, the history of the origin, revival and

development of Khadi.

Activities of Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh (1925-1953)

The activities are as under:

(1) Improvement in Tools and Instruments

After the revival and re-establishment of Khadi, in the later years the attention was given towards the improvement in tools and equipments, particularly in the spinning, because spinning was a common activity. It provided maximum employment opportunities. This was an activity done in the leisure hours.

There was considerable amount of improvement in spinning tools. At the outset, we could see only 'Takali'. In the later years there were so many changes and we find 'Yeravada Charakha', 'Magan Charakha' and finally 'Ambar Charakha'. This resulted in the improvement of total quality and quantity of the yarn. In keeping with this, there was also a lot of improvement in weaving instruments, like 'Pathashala Mag', 'Vardha Mag', 'Phatka Mag' etc.

(2) Stress on Self-sufficiency in Clothing

The Khadi Karyakartas went to the villages to encourage the people to produce their own clothing and through this the

objective of decentralisation was also achieved.

(3) New Experiment in Khadi

With the available cotton in the local market the Charakha Sangh endeavoured to produce Khadi in abundance. This was a new experiment because of the fact that the yarn was produced from the cotton produced in India.

Along with this, the Khadi training came to be imparted in the Rashtriya Schools and other Schools. Both long and short term courses were started in spinning, weaving and other activities at Bardoli, Vardha and at some universities also. Khadi institutions got devoted workers from these schools in future.

(4) Khadi Sales Promotion

For the sales promotion of Khadi, two vital tools were adopted : (a) Exhibition, and (b) Publicity.

(a) Exhibitions

Exhibitions were arranged by Khadi institutions and Charakha Sangh at different places. These were the means to acquaint the people with the utility of Khadi and also the science and technology utilised in it. To promote the sales, they used the sales competition too. This point was being stressed even by the

KVIC after 1956.

(b) Publicity

During this period so many books, magazines, pamphlets etc. were being published on Khadi production and technique. Khadi found its publicity through the speeches of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinobaji throughout the country. Gandhiji published articles on Khadi in 'Harijan' and 'Hindu'. The publicity of the Khadi was achieved by the books and magazines written and published by the eminent personalities. Shri Dattopant Dastane wrote a book on 'Weaving'. Shri T.C. Kumarappa wrote a book entitled 'Economy of Peace'. A critical study of Khadi was made by Babubhai Menta in his book. The two magazines 'Sarvodaya' and 'Khadi Jagat' had their valuable contributions. There are other writers like Dwarkanath Lele, Keshavrao Deodhar, Kundar Diwan, etc. Total publications were sixty in number.

In brief the above mentioned are the functions performed by Akhil Bharatiya Charakha Sangh.

In short this is the historical background of Khadi since 1920 to 1953.