

THE BIRTH OF KHAADI

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Abstract

Khaadi constitutes an important segment of the textile sector. Khaadi has been defined as any cloth woven on handlooms in India from cotton, silk or woollen yarn handspun in India or from a mixture of any two or all of such yarns. The main objectives of the study are to describe the importance and birth of 'Khaadi'.

The father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi urged the people of India to wear Khaadi garments. It was not only a call to create self-reliance but also a call to wear something that could demonstrate the unity of India. Khaadi was given an important status by Gandhi after his return from South Africa. While in search of the Charkha, Gandhiji felt that a nation should turn to mass production goods. Most of the Khaadi cloth is of pure white (bleached or unbleached), and most of the people wear them based on their "ideology". Khaadi has an extremely important connection with India's freedom movement, and has become virtually symbolic of the struggle for freedom.

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbander, India. He became one of the most respected spiritual and political leaders of the 1900's. Gandhi helped free the Indian people from British rule through non-violent resistance and is honoured by Indians as the father of the Indian Nation. Gandhi is known as 'Mahatma' was a great hero who served the nation with truth and non-violence.

Mohandas Gandhi, known as Mahatma Gandhi, also known as Mahatma the Great Soul, was the "Father of modern India". He originally came from

western India, a city called Porbandar, Gujarat. He was born on 2nd October 1869. Gandhi was one of the youngest of the three sons of Karamchand Gandhi who was a prime minister successively in Porbandar, Rajkot and Vankaner states. Gandhi ji's mother was Putlibai, Karamchand Gandhi's fourth wife. Several members of his family worked for the Govt of the state. In 1876 he attended a primary school in Rajkot until the twelfth year. Later on he was engaged to Kasturibai. In 1881 Gandhi went to receive further education in a high school (in Rajkot). Two years later in 1883 he married Kasturibai. When Gandhi ji was 18 years old, he went to England to study law. After he became a lawyer he went to the British colony of South Africa where he experienced laws that said people with dark skin had fewer rights than people with light skin. In 1897, Gandhi was attacked by a group of people in Durban Harbor, South Africa, when he was going to work. He went to South Africa because he could not find work in India. When travelling through South Africa, Gandhi was also kicked out of first class train because of his skin colour. Then Gandhi started protesting against segregation. He decided then to become a political activist, so he could help change these unfair laws. He created a powerful, non-violent movement. During Gandhi's life, India was a colony of the UK, but wanted independence. He was a huge leader during that era and his thoughts helped catalyze the Indian independence movement.

The Birth of Khadi:-

Gandhi ji 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.

Gandhi ji started his movement for Khadi in 1918. Gandhi ji said, 'I have seen a handloom or a spinning wheel when in 1908 I described it in Hind Swaraj as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India. In 1915, when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning wheel.'

When the Satyagraha Ashram was founded at Sabarmati, we introduced a few handlooms there. But no sooner had we done this than we found ourselves up against a difficulty. All of us belonged either to the liberal professions or to business; not one of us was an artisan. We needed a weaving expert to teach us to weave before we could work the looms. One was at last procured from Palanpur, but he did not communicate to us the whole of his art. But Mahanlal Gandhi was not to be easily baffled. Possessed of a natural talent for mechanics, he was able fully to master the art before long, and one after another several new weavers were trained up in the Ashram.

The object that we set before ourselves was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We therefore forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth, and all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only. The adoption of this practice brought us a world of experience. It enabled us to know, from direct contact, the conditions of life among the weavers, the extent of their production, the handicaps in the way of their obtaining their yarn supply, the way in which they were being made victims of fraud, and, lastly, their ever growing indebtedness. We were not in a position immediately to manufacture all the cloth for our needs. The alternative therefore was to get our cloth supply from handloom weavers. But ready-made cloth from Indian mill-yarn was not easily obtainable either from the cloth-dealers or from the weavers themselves. All the fine cloth woven by the weavers was from foreign yarn, since Indian mills did not spin fine counts. Even today the outturn of higher counts by Indian mills is very limited, whilst highest counts they cannot spin at all. It was after the greatest effort that we were at last able to find some weavers who condescended to weave Swadeshi yarn for us, and only on condition that the Ashram would take up all the cloth that they might produce. By thus adopting cloth woven from mill-yarn as our wear, and propagating it among our friends,

we made ourselves voluntary agents of the Indian spinning mills. This in its turn brought us into contact with the mills, and enabled us to know something about their management and their handicaps. We saw that the aim of the mills was more and more to weave the yarn spun by them; their co-operation with the handloom weaver was not willing, but unavoidable and temporary. We became impatient to be able to spin our own yam. It was clear that, until we could do this ourselves, dependence on the mills would remain. We did not feel that we could render any service to the country by continuing as agents of Indian spinning mills.

No end of difficulties again faced us. We could get neither a spinning wheel nor a spinner to teach us how to spin. We were employing some wheels for filling pins and bobbins for weaving in the Ashram. But we had no idea that these could be used as spinning wheels. Once Kalidas Jhaveri discovered a woman who, he said, would demonstrate to us how spinning was done. We sent to her a member of the Ashram who was known for his great versatility in learning new things. But even he returned without wresting the secret of the art. So the time passed on, and my impatience grew with the time. I plied every chance visitor to the Ashram who was likely to possess some information about hand spinning with questions about the art. But the art being confined to women and having been all but exterminated, if there was some stray spinner still surviving in some obscure corner, only a member of that sex was likely to find out her whereabouts.

In the year 1917 I was taken by my Gujarati friends to preside at the Broach Educational Conference. It was here that I discovered that remarkable lady Gangabehn Majmudar. She was a widow, but her enterprising spirit knew no bounds. Her education, in the accepted sense of the term, was not much. But in courage and commonsense she easily surpassed the general run of our educated women. She had already got rid of the curse of untouchability, and

fearlessly moved among and served the suppressed classes. She had means of her own, and her needs were few. She had a well seasoned constitution, and went about everywhere without an escort. She felt quite at home on horseback. I came to know her more intimately at the Godhra Conference. To her I poured out my grief about the charkha, and she lightened my burden by a promise to prosecute an earnest and incessant search for the spinning wheel.

Conclusion:-

In 1918 Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khaadi as relief programme for the poor masses living in India's villages. Spinning and weaving was elevated to an ideology for self reliance and self government it requires practically no outlay or capital, even an improved spinning wheel can be easily and cheaply made. Almost a year ago prime minister. Narendra Modi, on his 'Mann Ki Baat' radio show, spoke about how he sees Khaadi as not just a type of cloth but a movement that will be instrumental in rural poverty alleviation. He went into twitter to give a shout out to all Indian to buy a Khaadi product on the following October 2, as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. Mr. Modi's views on the transforming role of 'Khaadi' were a reiteration of Gandhi's ideas that had echoed throughout Indians freedom struggle. Before delving into the nuances of Gandhi's ideas on Khaadi, it would be interesting to understand the context which conditioned his thinking to advocate for Khaadi. Why did a western educated barrister who spent his prime years overseas become an exemplary figure for the usage of Khaadi and come to represent the art of spinning in India?

The early stages of Indian freedom struggle were dominated by the upper caste, upper class educated elite. In order to move beyond this exclusivity and build a mass movement, Mahatma Gandhi banked on the charka (Spinning Wheel), which was familiar to every rural household. Today, one cannot imagine Mahatma Gandhi without his spinning wheel. For Gandhi, Khaadi represented the Swadeshi mentality of his people and their determination to

seek all the necessities of life from the local community itself. As Gandhi linked Khaadi with the Indian Independence movement, it served a twin purpose of self-reliance and participation of rural poor in the struggle. He recognized that the promotion of Khaadi will contribute to rural poverty alleviation. Thus, Charka become the Symbol of freedom struggle and was used as a political weapon across the freedom struggle to bridge the divide between villages and towns.

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