International Journal of Applied Social Science
Volume 6 (5), May (2019) : 1296-1303
Received : 27.03.2019; Revised : 12.04.2019; Accepted : 27.04.2019

RESEARCH ARTICLE
ISSN : 2394-1405 (Print)

Charkha: Symbol of Identity, Swadeshi and Swaraj Past and Present

GOURI SRIVASTAVA*[1] AND BHARTI PANDEY[2]
Department of Education in Social Sciences
National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi (India)

ABSTRACT

Charkha became an important symbol in the struggle for *swaraj*. It reflected the commitment of our freedom fighters towards *swadeshi, buniyadi siksha,* self-assertion and self-reliance. It was accorded a significant place in Gandhiji's scheme of constructive work as it addressed poverty, unemployment and linked women with the freedom struggle. The journey of spinning and weaving of variety of textiles can be traced since the ancient times. It is important to know that textiles enjoy a favourable balance of trade till the onset of industrial revolution and colonization. While it is a fact that in this sector a decline was witnessed with the change in the composition of finished textiles to raw cotton, its revival was once again seen during the *swadeshi* movement and other subsequent movements of India's freedom struggle. The present paper explores this time line of development.

Key Words : Charkha, Swadeshi, Swaraj

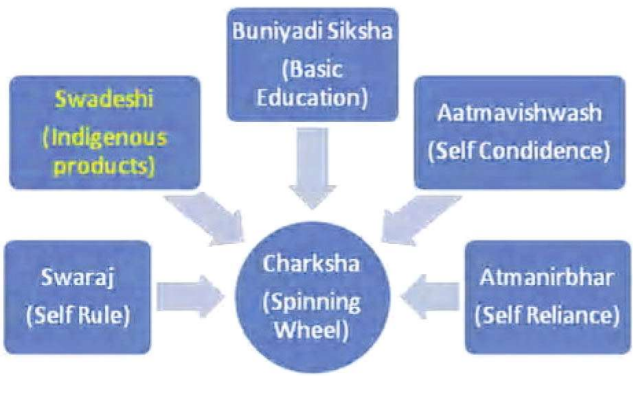

Fig. : Folk Literary Presentation on Promoting the use of Khaddar

Folk Literally Presentation on promoting the use of Khaddar

Piya saree humelaadonayetaarki, khaddar kebahaarkina
Saree deshilaadoaap, videshivastrachoonahaipaap, ab to
Dil me yahikarleenavichaarki, napahinabgulenaarkina.
Choli khaddar hi kilaado, uskokesariyarangwa do, ab
to fauz
Kesariyadebin ne taiyaarki, "uma se sardaarkina.
charkha
Chalaavogharghar, bachebharatkamaalozar,
unnatihovegi fir
Bharat me vyaaparki, desikarobaarkina.
chodotaadiaurshaarab,
badbumaile se kharab, 'pannolal'kehtebaat ye
bichaarki,
Deshkeuddhaarkin khaddar kebhaar
Harekhunarkepeedhithovokaregulaamikijanjeer
Mukhujjawalhobharatmaakabahutdinotakrahiadheer.
"pannalaal" kahedheerajmaakobandhadiya Shri
Gandhi ne. Swatantr.

(Source: This literary expression is taken from GandhijiKa Charkha, published by Pannalal Verma Bajnopdeshak, 1931. In this poem the poet links himself with the freedom struggle asking the women to wear sarees and blouse of *Khaddar,* handmade cloth).

How to cite this Article: Srivastava, Gouri and Pandey, Bharti (2019). Charkha: Symbol of Identity, Swadeshi and Swaraj Past and Present. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.,* **6** (5) : 1296-1303.

INTRODUCTION

The journey of India's struggle for *swaraj* is an interesting account of people, narratives, episodes and symbols that collectively weave the legacy of sacrifice, patriotism and commitment for a cause. In this historic struggle for freedom *charkha* was popularised for strengthening identity and the thrust on *swadeshi* was to infuse men and women from different context to collectively work constructively for attaining *swaraj* and self-reliance. Gandhiji realised the importance of *charkha* from two perspectives – (a) Spinning would involve women, in particular, from rural and urban context into the freedom struggle and (b) it would provide employment to the masses and their by address poverty. Spinning and weaving would bring together the educated and uneducated to address the cause for enslavement, subjugation from colonial rule. While it is significant to know that Gandhiji accorded *charkha* centrality and *charkha* became a symbol in various movements of the freedom struggle, its relevance as a means for livelihood was deeply rooted in India's historical past.

During the freedom struggle *charkha* had inspired many of our freedom fighters who composed different literary expositions in Hindi and other vernacular languages. These literary works were prohibited and their circulation banned by the British government during the Non-cooperation,the Civil Disobedience and the Quit India movements. It also became a symbol used in the flag for India's independence that was unfurled by freedom fighters in different government buildings. Many of the freedom fighters like Dr. Shivpujan Rai, Risheshwar Rai, Vansh Narayan Rai, Varishta Narayan Rai, Vansh Narayan Rai, Narayan Rai, Raj Narayan Rai, Rambadan Upadhyay lost their lives at Mohammadabad Tehsil, in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, carrying the flag for freedom (Pamphlet, Shaheed Smarak Samiti, Muhammadabad, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh). In Allahabad, Lal Padmadhar was shot at by the British officer for holding the flag of Indian independence.

Textiles: Journey through Pages of History:

The process of textile production involved spinning and weaving, which was an important activity prior to the making of finished cloth. The production of variety of textiles in India can be traced to pre-historic and proto-historic period. A seal with Indus script found in Sumer bears on its back the imprint of coarse cloth. It may be inferred from this source that cotton textile was one of the important exports from India (Chopra, 2015). Also the discovery of bronze needles and spindles and a madder-dyes cotton fragment from Mohenjo-Daro are the earliest evidence of cotton and silk. From the same civilization the excavations of stone statues of high priest figure wearing decorated patterned shawl covering the left shoulder passing under the right arm indicate the achievement of the weaving pattern of cloth as early as third millennium BCE (Bhatnagar, 2005).

A female figurine is shown wearing cloth generally down the waist and scanty garments down the knees. The discovery of dying vats highlight that the knowledge of dying was also known to the people of this civilization. (Shenai, 1992).

The Vedic literatures have many references to weaving. There were female weavers called – *Vayitris* and *Siris.* In the Vedic period reference to woollen fabric (avi, *samulya*) or silk (*tarpya*) also comes from these literatures (1500-900 BCE). The Rigveda mentions two garments the *Vasa* (lower garment) and the *adi vasa* (upper garment) and under garment *i.e. Nivi.* Woollen threads called *Varna sutra* is mentioned in the later Samhitas and the Brahamanas. The skin of tiger and deer were worn by the *yogis* (spiritual persons). A type of garment called *atkal* is described as woven. Female dancers wore gorgeous embroider garments called *pesas.* A bride wore a special dress called *vadhuya*. In one of the hymns of Rig-Veda there is reference to the technique of weaving. Agni, the god of fire declares- "Oh I know not either wrap or woof. I know not the weft of the weave". We read of Usha, the goddess of the dawn as being clothed with radiance (Shenai, 1992).

During the Mauryan period an important source that makes a mention of Indian textiles is Arthashastra, which highlights the methodology of distributing materials to spinner and weavers who either work individually or as guild members. This document mentions that widows were permitted to weave and mentions penalty for fraudulent practices and list the taxes to be paid by weavers. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes mentions in his account that "their robes are work in gold and ornament with precious stone. They wear also flower garments made of finest linen." About textile and embroidery the Greeks with Alexander the great wrote of the fine flowered muslin and robes embroidered in gold that they had seen in India. Thus, these accounts highlight the dexterity, uniqueness and variety of the Indian

textiles (Shenai, 1992).

Textiles and Exports:

Several sources in particular, travel accounts have highlighted the favourable balance of trade that the sub-continent enjoyed in the realm of cotton textiles since the ancient times. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* written by an autonomous soldier of Alexandria describes Indian ports along with their exports and imports during the Gupta period. The commodity exported as mentioned in this source consisted of precious and semi-precious stones, diamonds, pearls, sapphires etc. The variety of exported cotton cloth called *monakhe, sagmatogene, muslin* and *mallo* were referred in this source. During the post Gupta period cotton yarn and cloth continued to be an important item of export along with other articles. During the reign of Gurjara and Pratiharas the principal articles of exports appear to have been cotton yarn and cloth, including *muslin* both rough and fine, among other articles (Chopra, 2015).

By the 14 to 17th century the export of cotton continued to enjoy a favourable market, both within the country and outside. Fine varieties of cotton were produced in Varanasi, Mau, Malwa, Gujarat and Dhaka. Cotton weaving also supported certain industries such as dying, calico printing, tie and dye (*bandhani*) in Rajasthan as well as in some parts of Gujarat. Gujarat had a long established silk weaving industry. Cambay and Ahmadabad silk were listed among luxury goods. In the Deccan, Khandesh cotton was well known. Thus in the field of textiles India had enjoyed a favourable balance of trade (Chopra, 2015).

According to K.N. Chaudhury, the Indian cotton industry in maintaining its existing overseas market and in creating new ones in the west before the period of industrial revolution owed much to the possession of highly specialized technical skills in manufacturing as to lower the cost of production (Chaudhury, 2001).

The Indian method of textile production relied heavily on the system of commercial advances. It was quite different from the "putting out" system. The English merchants in Bengal advanced cash sums and not raw materials to the weavers and artisans. Therefore, the making of different types of textiles was left to the weavers' knowhow. It is significant to note that the looms at Dacca produce cloth of various kinds – ranging from the fine gossamer muslin to coarse thick fabric worn by the poor riots. Indian textiles continued to be demanded in England prior to Industrial Revolution. Therefore, the success of indigenous cotton textiles in maintaining a successful overseas market prior to Industrial revolution was mainly due to the skills, dexterity of the Indian weavers in preparing variety of cotton textiles like muslin, calico and chintz. The making of cloth required in-depth knowledge of preparations and treatment of natural fibers before it could be made ready for weaving. Prior to the invention of different technical devices in cotton sector, hand spinning in Europe could seldom compete with the quality of Indian textiles. The Prohibition Act of 1701 in England failed to stop imports of Indian Calicos into England (Srivastava, 2001).

The Decline:

This scenario underwent a change with the opening up of sea routes between different European countries and India by the end of 15th century. Initially the new trade with the European countries stimulated production of commodities such as textiles and indigo (Chopra, 2015). However, with the industrial revolution in Britain, the demand for finished textiles from India gradually declined. The exports of commodities from India now witnessed a change. It included raw materials such as raw cotton and this change affected the favourable trade balance. From the manufacturer of finished cotton products, India had been reduced to the position of an importer of foreign manufactures (Chopra, 2015).

Thus, by 1800 the export of Indian silk and cotton to Britain had significantly declined. Only raw cotton was exported and this was used to manufacture British textiles which were exported back to India. Many of the textiles towns were deserted and the spinner and weaver had moved elsewhere in search of employment. For example, the population of Dacca, once a centre of the textile industry and described by one visitor as the Manchester of India, had fallen from 450,000 in 1765 to 20,000 in 1800. This policy also benefited Britain as it did not need to depend so much on cotton supplies from the southern states of the recently independent United States of America (Re- Discovering Britain 1750-1900, 2001).

The Revival:

However, with the beginning of the *swadeshi* movement of 1905, there was once again revival of our indigenously made cotton textiles. The call for boycott of foreign goods and *swadeshi* gave impetus to indigenous industries particularly textiles. Though the Manchester

made cloth was the chief target of attack, it also extended to goods like salt, sugar as well as all other items made in Britain. The spirit of *swadeshi* was also visible in the Non-cooperation movement of 1920. In the scheme of Gandhiji's constructive programme, hand spinning and weaving acquired centrality. *Khaddar* was to be popularised among all segments of society to counter the demand of British textiles. During this movement Gandhiji's perception of indigenously made cotton cloth from *charkha* is given below :

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes, and every village must repossess its own weaver (Young India, 21-7-'20 quoted in India of My Dreams, M.K. Gandhi, (2012), Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad – 14, p. 113).

Further in another message on *charkha* Gandhiji said the following:

I….claim for the *charkha* the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and businesslike manner. The *charkha*, therefore, is not only not useless….but it is a useful and indispensable article for every home. It is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and, therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of good-will and self-help. ……..I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the *charkha*. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, good will and love. And with all that, inasmuch as the loss of it brought about India's slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom (Young India, 18-12-'21 quoted in India of My Dreams, M.K. Gandhi, (2012), Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmadabad – 14, p. 114).

It is interesting to note that in the Non-cooperation movement Gandhiji personally worked to improve the *charkha* technologically. In 1921, he set up an independent body known as 'The All India Spinners' Association', popularly called 'The *Charkha Sangh*'. In 1923, he laid down three conditions for the award of price of Rs. five thousand offered by Rava Shanker Zaveri of Bombay on behalf of the *Charkha Sangh* for evolving a more efficient charkha. The *charkha* had to be simple in operation, cheap in production and be able to produce good quality yarn. In 1929 Gandhiji once again offered a price of rupees one lakh for invention of better design of *Charkha.* This shows Gandhiji's keen interest in homemade production of textiles and improving the quality of C*harkha*.

It is note worthy to state that Gandhiji in several of his speeches reiterated that the increasing use of charkha would help in addressing unemployment and poverty in India. He also stated that once a market for hand spun cloth is created it would strengthen the spirit of *swadeshi* and inculcate in all Indians self-esteem and self-confidence. In the long run he envisioned self –reliance in the textile sector. Some of the excerpts of his speeches in Bihar that highlight the use of *charkha* and its importance to Indian economy is mentioned in the subsequent paragraphs:

Speech at Bettiah, January 23, 1927:

"…..... He said that he was glad to see the people of Bettiah after a fairly long time…. Champaran ,and in it Motihari and Bettiah, he said, were sacred places to him. He had got himself partly acquainted with the poverty of modern India from his experiences in Champaran where he had seen with his own eyes how miserable an existence the poor people of the village usually had…… Referring to primary education, he said that in India, especially in Champaran, spinning must form a part of the curriculum of primary education. Knowledge of letters, he said, was of course necessary, absolutely necessary, but that knowledge without any vocational training would be absolutely useless to the poor people of India. Unless some sort of vocational training was given to the student in rudimentary stage, they would not learn the lesson of self-help in their after life. He hoped that spinning would receive necessary attention of the municipal Commissioner of Bettiah" (The Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi XXXIII, January-June, 1927,1968).

Speech at Mission School, Muzaffarpur, January 25, 1927:

"....Several girls were seen working at the *charkha* who all appeared like novices and Mahatmaji asked the European lady in charge herself to learn spinning before expecting her students to learn it. The table cloth in the hall was a foreign piece and all the girls and their teachers were clad in foreign clothes. At this Mahatmaji remarked

that they must have faith in *khaddar* before having faith in spinning**.** On being asked by the superintendent to speak something, Mahatmaji remarked that he had no other message except that of *khaddar* to give them. They might belong to whatever religion they chose, but if they had no love for the poor there was no chance of their prayer being heard by God. In the peculiar circumstances of India, the love for the poor could be given no other (or) better expression than by wearing *khadi* and he requested the girls to put on *khadi* and *khadi* alone (The Searchlight, 30-1-1927, quoted in the collected works of Mahatma Gandhi Jan-June, 1927, Vol. XXX-III Navajivan Trust, 1969, Ahmedabad, p. 11)

Speech at Tilak Maidan, Muzaffarpur:

"….. continuing, he said that *khaddar* alone was the inexhaustible source of their strength, if they could make even that one work successful, *swaraj* would be at their gate. As long as they did not learn to sympathetically consider the case of the poor people of India, they had no right to demand swaraj and as long as this did not cultivate that feeling they were no true advocates of *swaraj* either. So long as there remained one poor man who might be starving in the country, *swaraj* for India was meaningless to him. To feed the Hungary, to give water to the thirsty, that was the religious duty of every human being and so long as each one was not filled with that noble idea, *dharmarajya*, he said, was unattainable. How were they to practice that religion? Through *khaddar* and *khaddar* alone. No other better way was suggested to him and he believed that no other better way was there.

He next explained at length the economy of *khaddar* very clearly showed how every farthing spent over *khaddar* went to the pocket of the poor. Should they not give even that much of help to the poor villagers who supplied them with their daily bread ? It was the religious duty of every human being to keep the poor and the needy…. *khaddar* might be course, *khaddar* might be costly, but still that was the gift of these mother. Should they throw aside the precious gift? they should rather consider foreign cloth as coarse and costly and put *khaddar* piece on their hands in profound reverence. (The Searchlight, 30-1-1927, quoted in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXX-III, Jan-June, 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, pp. 13 - 14).

Speech at Students Meeting Muzaffarpur (January 25, 1927):

…… He expected the students to help the *khaddar* movement with all their wealth and energy and he hoped that Muzaffarpur students would not lag behind the students of other parts of the country…….. Living as they were in the headquarters of the provincial *khadi* Organization they might learn the *khaddar* work in all its phases and spend their spare hours in that work. He would ask then even to spin for at least half an hour a day not for earning money themselves but to set an example to the poor unemployed villagers. But all this they must do only after having faith in *khaddar*; and in order to acquire that faith, they must enquire of himself or of anyone else about the economy of *khaddar*.

……..what he wanted them to do was that they should purchase *khadi* and thus give employment and food to thousands of their unemployed countrymen and women.

There was no loan upon the students is respect of *khadi*-wearing. He described how Rajagopalachari was invited in a Government College in Madaras to speak on *khaddar* and how with the help of the Principal, professor and students he was successful in starting a *Khadi* Union in that college. He hoped that the example of that college would be followed even in Muzaffarpur. To understand the principle of economy of *Khaddar*. They might read the prize essay with profit. He hoped that after finishing the book they all might become believers in *khadi*. The only objection he said, that could remain against wearing of *khadi* was love of fashion and ease and he asked the students as to how they could expect to get swaraj if they could not make even so little sacrifice for the sake of the country. He exhorted the students to promise solemnly on the spot that they would use nothing but *khaddar* hence forth and also to burn their foreign cloth if possible (The Searchlight, 30-1-1927, quoted in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXX-III, Jan-June, 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, p. 15)

Speech at Begusarai (January 26, 1927):

…….But to enable all to do their duty he had suggested to them a simple religion – that of *charkha*. With the death of Charkha had begun the poverty of India and it was going on increasing as the time rolled on…… It was an axiomatic truth, he said, that with the revival of *charkha* the ancient glory of India would be revived. He emphatically declared that the *charkha* was the thing which was capable of being universally used and of giving

employment to thousands of unemployed men and women. He regretted that while *khadi* had made considerable progress in other parts of the country it had gone down in Begusarai. The only reason that he would imagine of this mishap, could be, that the workers had either lost faith in *charkha* or given up working for it he appealed to the workers to devote a little of these time at least for *khaddar* work. (The Searchlight, 4-2-1927, quoted in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Jan-June, 1927, Vol. XXX-III Navajivan Trust, 1969, Ahmedabad, p.17)

Speech at Kharagpur:

……. He said that it was an axiomatic truth that the killing) poverty of India began with the disappearance of *charkha* from this land and to bring back her ancient prosperity, revival of *charkha* was an absolute necessity…… *charkha* was the thing, he said, to give some sort of employment to these poor starving people for the success of that movement. He said that there was a time in India when *charkha* was considered as Imp. As household hearth and he requested the people to give that place of honour once more to this little but powerful instrument. He appealed to the audience to religiously avoid all foreign clothes and clothe themselves in pure *khadi*, woven by their own brothers with yarn spun by their own starving sister. (The Search light, 4-2-1927 quoted in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXX-III, Jan-June, 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmadabad, pp.22-23)

Speech at Jamui – January 27, 1927:

"……. Continuing, he said that spinning was the only industry which might flourish in every cottage and it was the work which was capable of being joined in by all persons irrespective of their age, sex, positions and learning. Working at the *charkha*, he said, was a *mahayajna,* and he invited all to participate in it. He exhorted the audience to use *khaddar* in preference to all other sort of cloth……"

"…….. whatever sacrifice the wearing of *khaddar* at present involved, he said, is the sacrifice that they must undergo for expiating all their past sins…….. (Source:The search light, 4-2-1927, quoted in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXX-III, Jan-June, 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, p. 24)

Speech at Inauguration of *khadi* Exhibition, Patna, January 30, 1927:

"…….. Proceeding, Mahatmaji exhorted the people not to use foreign or mill made cloth it was their dharma to go in for *khadi* and *khadi* alone. Thus clothes should be made only in the villages as was the case only 50 years back. He wanted to review the same good old days of *charkha* - hand spinning and hand weaving. Economists were of the opinion that Gandhi, was trying to achieve an impossible thing. Some people also humorously observed that when Gandhi died there would be no dearth of fuel for burning his mortal frame, for he had made ample provision for the same beforehand in the shape of so many *charkha* that he had got prepared. But all the same it was a fact that in the Mill Industry the poor labourers barely got a piece out of any rupee worth of things that they produced – it was never even one *anna*.

Khadi was a common platform that he had created for both the officials and non-officials, for Hindus and the Mussalmans ……. people also complained that *khadi* was coarse and rough. But he asked, would they refuse the bread prepared by their mother if it was coarse in preference to the fine biscuits of Delhi. He hoped not. He recommended the prize essay "Hand-Spinning and Hand-Weaving", by Prof. S.V. Puntambekar and Sjt. Varadachari for their careful perusal and concluded by earnestly appealing to all particularly to the educated and the rich – to take to Charkha and *khadi* and thus create an atmosphere for it in the country. When once that was done there would be no need for any exhibition of the kind that he was going to open that evening. It behoved them to do something for the poor in the villages at whose expense they in towns and cities had been thriving so long. (The Searchlight, 2-2-1927**,** quoted in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXX-III , Jan-June, 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, pp. 29, 31)

Bangalore *Khadi* Exhibition:

…..That *khadi* has a political side to it need not frighten a single person, even though he may be an official…..It is not an emblem of revolt; but it is an emblem of self- assertion, self-reliance and determination to abolish artificial distinctions between rich and poor, between capital and labour, and establish a living bond between the two…. *khadi* cannot make real progress; unless there are people to wear it…(Young India, 30-6-

1927 in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXXIV, June-Sep. 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, pp. 78-80)

***Khadi* and Persons with Special Needs:**

The Blind Spinner:

An account of the Blind Spinner moved Gandhiji at an *khadi* Exhibition held at Bangalore where in a correspondent had sent Gandhiji the following beautiful lines by Helen Hunt Jackson:

Like a blind spinner in the sun
I tread my day;
I know that all the threads will run
The appointed way;
I know each day will bring its task
And, being blind, no more I ask.
I do not know the use or name
Of what I spin;
I only know that someone came
And laid within
My hand the thread and said,'Sir you are blind,
But one thing you can do.'
Sometimes the threads so rough and fast
And tangled fly,
I know wild storms are sweeping past,
And fear that i
Shall fall, but dare not fly to find
A safer place, since Iam blind
I know not why, but Iam sure
That tint and place,
In some great fabric to endure
Past time and race,
My thread will have; so from the first,
Though blind, I never felt accurst.

Thus, Gandhiji through his several messages recalled that *khadi* and its wide usage by people of India would transform the country. The poem of the Blind Spinner was an indication of self-esteem and self-reliance that *khadi* would bring about among all. (Young India, 25-8-1927 in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXXIV, June-Sep. 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust , Ahmedabad, pp. 399-400)

In many other places *Charkha* was the focus of Gandhiji's speeches. They were spoken at different forums address to labours. Some excerpts of his messages to them are:

Honourable Labour:

…fifty or sixty years ago,….the spinning wheel was a sign not of poverty but of culture and respectability, and the rich used to spin willingly as a matter of duty, just as they do now the work of extracting cotton from the pods and do not mind accepting money for it, though such work is a means of livelihood for the poor. As long as the rich had not given up spinning, the poor were safe and spinning did not disappear as an occupation. Such universal occupations are a duty as much as they are occupation (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XXXIV, June-Sep. 1927, 1969, Navajivan Trust , Ahmadabad, pp. 94-95)

Spinning and Women:

It was Gandhiji who was able to provide a forum for women and linked them with national struggle. Gandhiji relate social reform with social work, especially for uplifting the status of women.

To initiate his spinning project among women, Gandhiji needed women who were committed to it and who could teach others. Among the first women taught to spin under the auspices of Gandhi once the art was rediscovered were Avantikabai Gokhale, Ramabai Kamdar and the widowed of Shankerlal Banker who was also the mothet-in-law of Lilavati Banker. Spinning was an engaging activity that could connect social welfare and the *swadeshi* movement. It was an activity that could be taken by all women convinced and interested. It could engage educated and uneducated, rural and urban. In his own words:

"All I mean is that it is essential that women make their contributions to the development taking place in the country. This requires no knowledge of letters. It is not true that, without such knowledge one cannot take part in the national work." (Source : Gandhi's Speech at Women's' Meeting, Bombay May 8, 1919, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.XV)

Thus *Charkha* and spinning activities linked women with the swadeshi movement and the non-cooperation programme. The essence of the swadeshi programme was the boycott of British goods, particularly cloth and the spinning and weaving of *khadi*

"The swadeshi vow cannot be kept fully if women do not help. Men alone will be able to do nothing in the matter. They can have no control over the children, that is the women's sphere. To look after children, to dress them is the mothers' duty and, therefore, it is necessary

that women should be fired with the spirit of swadeshi, so long as that does not happen, men will not be in a position to take the vow" (Srivastava, 2000).

Through the issue of their clothing, the effects of colonialism could be tangibly demonstrated to women within the separate and private sphere. Wearing foreign cloth was the life condition through which middle class women of the household experienced colonialism.

The question of foreign cloth was the means by which women could be led to an understanding of the necessity of nationalism not as an abstraction, but as a meaningful component of their own lives.

To, facilitate the task of spinning, which Gandhi had especially delegated to women, a number of classes were set up to teach women to perform their duties for the nation. Avantikabai Gokhale tried to draw women into the national movement through teaching spinning in regular classes conducted by Gauribai Khadilkar from the Hind Mahila Samaj since 1920. Hand spinning was considered to be the constructive work of women. At the mass level *swadeshi* was spinning, wearing *khaddar* and support for boycott of foreign cloth. Thus, *charkha* and spinning was revived during the freedom struggle especially by Mahatma Gandhi.

Relevance of *khadi* in Contemporary Times:

In contemporary times *khadi* has continued to be an important industry. The Government of India has formed *khadi* and Village Industry Commission under the Act of Parliament (No. 61 of 1956) and as amended in 1987 and 2006 is a statutory organization under the ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) engaged in promoting and developing *khadi* and village industry for providing employment in rural areas thereby strengthening the rural economy. The popularisation of *khadi* has also been done through media.

REFERENCES

Bhatnagar, Parul (2005). Decorative Design History In Indian Textiles and Costumes, Abhishekh Publishers, Delhi.

Chaudhuri, K.N. (1979). Economy and Society : Essays in Indian Economic and Social History, Oxford University Press, Delhi

Chopra, P.N. (2015). The Gazetteer of India, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

Gandhi, M.K., India of My Dreams (2012). Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad .

India 2018, Publish by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi

Pamphlet, Shaheed Smarak Samiti, Muhammadabad, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh

Re- Discovering Britain 1750-1900, (2001). John Murray (Publisher)Ltd., London, Series editor : Colin Shephard, Consultant Editor: Dave Martin, p.56)

Shenai, V.A. (1992). History of Textile Design, Sevak Publications, Bombay.

Srivastava, Gouri (2000). Women's Higher Education in the 19th Century, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

Srivastava, Gouri (2001). Education in India: A Historical Perspective, Anmol Publications, New Delhi.

The Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol XXXIII, January-June, 1927, (1968), Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad.

The Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol XXXIV, June-Sep, 1927, (1969),Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad.

Verma, Pannalal (1931), Gandhi jiKa Charkha, Pannalal Verma Bajnopdeshak.

****