

PEOPLES' EDUCATION PROGRAMME

I INTRODUCTION.

During the Golden Jubilee Year of Khadi movement and Silver Jubilee year of Indian Independence, i.e. 1972, we made an attempt to enroll 1,00,000 families pledged to wear Khadi and to use only Swadeshi articles in everything except clothing. It should be remembered that the attempt was not to enroll 1,00,000 individuals but that number of families. In order to achieve this object we found it imperative to organize khadi and village industries exhibition and to undertake a nationwide programme of people's education. Nearly 200 exhibitions were organized and also nearly one thousand public meetings, seminars, study classes, lectures. Etc. throughout the country. Hundreds of workers of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission were involved in this programme. But in the result we were able to enrol only about 50,000 thousand families which was only half the target we had kept in view. Our experience in this programme however made it very clear to us that our Peoples' Education Programme had a significance and purpose beyond the Jubilee year. There is nothing so good in the world that it propagate itself continuously without earnest human effort. Even truth, love and non-violence have to be studied, explained and propagated over and over again if they are to capture the conscience and imagination of mankind. The actual gain achieved was for more than the number of families enrolled. What we had succeed in doing was to take the message of khadi and village industries, as the concretization of Gandhiji's teachings, to the people, perhaps more than at any time after the passing of Gandhi. There was a stir in the minds of the people and a little reawakening of their conscience. This gave us hope that much more could be achieved by persisting in the Peoples' Education Programme and that it was our duty to do so.

II MAKING THE PROGRAMME PERMANENT

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission went into this matter carefully and took the decision to make the Peoples' Education Programme a permanent part of its work. We have already a Publicity Department which among other thing bring out monthly called "Khadigramodyog" and a fortnightly called "Jagriti" both the English and Hindi. These journals are fairly widely read as they furnish not only the economic and social ideology behind the khadi and village industries programmes but also reports of work and other available and relevant data. Several other journals take over the materials from our journals and make use of them freely. The Commission has now converted the Publicity Department into a Publicity and Peoples' Education Department. A high-level Committee has been set up to help this Department to function effectively. Shri.K.Arunachalm, Ex-Vice Chairman of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, has been appointed the Honorary Chairman of this Committee. We have given him an Officer at the level of Additional Director to help him to organize the work besides the already functioning Director of Publicity. There is no question of appointing a plethora of

lecturers or propagandists. Our intention is to involve all competent personnel of the Commission carrying out programme of khadi and village industries in this programme. How can anyone do khadi and village industries work without explaining the politics, the economics, the sociology and the citizenship values of this programme? To explain and propagate these values is the core of our peoples' Education Programme. It is often remarked that though our country now produces much more khadi and village industries articles than at any time before, including the era in which Gandhi himself led the movement, the present Khadi and village industries programme have lost their national dynamism and have settled down to a vast hum-drum production and trading process. Our peoples' Education Programme is specially designed to meet this challenge and to make khadi and village industries vibrant items again in the minds and practices of the people.

We shall in this brochure briefly process the objectives, methods of works, the phased aims from time to time and the manner of assessing the success or failure of the movement.

III THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- (A) The Khadi and Village Industries Commission has for its object taking employment to the unemployed millions in the rural areas. In our minds, employment is not merely a matter of work and wages but one of social transformation. The spinner the weavers and the innumerable artisans in the different village industries have to be approached not merely on the basis of work and wages, but on the basis of board-based human relations involving the development of the personality, mind, culture and the daily life of the artisans. Productive work and adult education have to go hand in hand to recover the spirit and aspirations of the Gandhian era. Gandhi once said that he would prefer one thinking and understanding spinner to thousand spinners merely working mechanically. One such spinner of his conception would be the spearhead of the non-violent revolution to transform society! Let us ponder over and understand these words of the Master. Our aim in the Peoples' Education Programme is first of all to take thinking and understanding to the artisans on the economic and social values of their work. This means we will have to teach them background of Gandhian politics and economics, how khadi and village industries become the symbol of national economic reconstruction and how it is the duty of every citizen to support and strengthen the movement. The object of the peoples' Education Programme is therefore first to educate the artisans and then the general public to understand the why and the how of every item of our work and the potency of our programmes to effect social transformation creatively and peacefully. The emphasis will be throughout on social transformation through constructive work and non-violent methods. *The Peoples' Education Programme will thus be a broad-based adult education programme through khadi and village industries.*
- (B) We have in every State a Director of the Commission with technical and ministerial staff attached to his office. Our Directors will be put in charge of this programme and they will select from among their available staff a few competent persons to take up the organization of the Peoples' Education Programme in their respective States. This would be our normal and official core of the organization for the work. But these officials of the Commission will draw up district-wise a list of other people who can help in taking the programme to the masses. Such

friends will be helped to take up his work in their own areas in every possible way. As during the Jubilee year we shall distribute literature, posters, exhibition articles, etc, Some limited funds will also be made available with the clear understanding that a great deal of this work will have to be undertaken as a labour of love and dedication by those concerned to keep alive not only the externals of khadi and village industries but their inner and vital significance and challenges. As time passes and if this programme catches on, we shall have a small army of helpers throughout India knit together by and through this programme. It should be possible for us then to create some impact on peoples' minds enabling more and more people to become habitual khadi wearers and to use only India made articles for everything except clothing and preferably village made articles. To use khadi in dress and then to use daily innumerable other foreign made articles, like watches, fountain pens, stationery, toilet articles, etc. will be a serious contradiction in ideas and practices. We shall thus at one stroke spread khadi and bring back the lost allegiance to swadeshi

- (C) We shall insist on quarterly reports of work done and then collate the same and publish the result in our journals, i.e. "Khadigramodyog" and "Jagriti", as also make the same available to papers and journals who would care to publish them. At the end of a year or two we shall ask a few outstanding educationists to assess the result of the work and suggest ways and means of improving it. The test of our success would be how many more students and the young, people in the different professions and walks of life and the general public adopt khadi as their habitual wear and buy swadeshi article. But even more than this quantitative test would be the awakening of the true values of citizenship which will make it imperative for the more fortunate and educated members of the community actively to remember and to go to the aid of the less fortunate in giving them proper employment.
- (D) The immediate task is that we take this programme of thinking and understanding to every spinner, weaver and to every artisan in the different village industries with whom we are already in close touch. Whatever there are at least 10 spinners or weavers or artisans in village industries, our workers in the locality should organize classes and studies for them. This can be done without any expenditure and immediately if our workers catch the vision of this programme let no one wait for detailed instructions but understand the broad prospective of the programme and take up the work wherever he or she is and make a beginning at once. It would be very desirable that we make a beginning on 30th January this year, the day the Master laid down his life for Truth and Non-Violence, Our workers will find that as they do this, new ideas and techniques of work will come to them unasked. We shall also from the all India headquarters and State headquarters help continually in providing guidance and worthwhile materials for the programme.

IV WHAT TO DO STEP BY STEP?

- (A) Each Director of the Commission in a State should taken personal charge of this programme as whole dealing with issues that arise quickly and effectively. He should inspire and guide all those engaged in the programme and give them all the assistance he can in their day to day work.

- (B) The Director should select a few such workers from among his staff, depending on the size of the State and population, who are really competent to come into this programme and who are eager to do so. Having selected them, he should sit with them and explain to them the objective and the methods of work of the programme. The Director should clear doubts in the minds of the workers selected for the work with patience and understanding. He should give the workers and feeling that he as the Director will help them at every stage and in every possible way.
- (C) A phased programme should be drawn up under which the selected workers would cover all the districts in the State within three months. This only means that the selected workers would go to the districts and initiate this programme at district headquarters in the same manner as the programme was initiated in State headquarters.
- (D) Each worker should draw up a list for each district of such friends who are competent and willing to help in this programme. Such helpers may be drawn from constructive work organizations in the districts, from colleges and from the general public. Workers in Khadi Institutions and Village Industries Centres should bear the main burden of this work without delay or hesitation. It would be good to have a list of at least 10 names from each district.
- (E) A worker should arrange that each of the selected friends would give at least one day in the month to speak at the meetings or in study circles which should not be confined to the town but should be taken to rural areas and to begin with wherever we have centres of khadi or village industries. If this is done systematically this work will be done in different parts of the district at least once a month. This would require careful planning and the whole-hearted consent of the persons invited to join the work. The actual travelling expenses and a daily allowance to meet food charges should be assured. Generally in such cases visiting lecturers and explainers may get free hospitality from friends in the area. This should be canvassed.

The subject matter for talks may be under the following heads. This need not be treated as final, but only as illustrative.

- (i) Elementary knowledge of the geography of India and the world in a few talks with the help of maps.
- (ii) The history of freedom movement in India with reference to the leading personalities. The freedom movement began before Gandhiji and is continued after him. This should not be forgotten.
- (iii) The role of Khadi and Village Industries in the constructive programme initiated by Gandhiji and the progress of this work during his life time and after.
- (iv) The establishment of the Khadi and Village Industries commission and its work during the last 20 years.
- (v) The present proportions of the work and the need for public co-operation.
- (vi) The imperative duty of citizens who are more fortunate and educated to help the less fortunate and particularly in the rural areas by adopting khadi as habitual wear and swadeshi articles for daily use and preferably village made articles.

- (vii) The emphasis of Gandhian Sociology on a casteless and classless Social Order and how the Khadi and Village Industries Programmes will clear the way for the same.
- (viii) The need for our workers to invite the collaboration of all those engaged in other constructive work organizations like the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Kasturba Trust, the Gandhi Smarak Nidi, the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Bharat Sevak Samaj, etc.
- (ix) The place of Harijans and all Backward and Minority Communities in the Khadi and Village Industries programmes of work.
- (x) The continuing validity of the Khadi and Village Industries programmes at the present time in India.

V LOOKING AHEAD

Probably there is nothing new in this programme. Most of us in the constructive programme have done this work also in some way or other everywhere. The attempt now is merely to systematize this work and make it continuous and uninterrupted. We should also explain how the structure and horizons of constructive work can never remain static but will go on changing and extending in response to new conditions of life. For instance, instruments and tools of production in khadi and Village Industries have undergone significant changes, and this process is bound to continue. Khadi cloth and products of village industries are now much better and more variegated in quantity and texture and can meet most peoples' needs. There are amongst us many thinkers and explainers of our programmes who for lack of opportunity do little work in this direction. Let us now give them that opportunity. It should be possible with the next two to three years not only to produce khadi and village industries articles and sell them, but to create through this work a reawakening of our minds to the political, economic, social and moral values for which Gandhiji gave us the constructive programme. The directors and workers concerned will collect brief reports of the work done and collate the same for the Commission and the Commission in turn will publish consolidated reports in the "Jagriti" from time to time.

The Chairman wishes to specially send all those who would work in this programme his personal greetings and good wishes. He looks forward with their co-operation to accomplish something at least of the objectives with which the Peoples' Education Programme has been launched.

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## KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES – THE GANDHIAN APPROACH

It is a remarkable phenomenon that, in India, big industries on the one hand and khadi and village industries on the other are both developing without active opposition to each other. This is the legacy of the Gandhian approach to economic development. Gandhiji had outstanding industrialists as close friends and collaborators in developing khadi and village industries. The core of this tradition of economic thought and action still remains a vital factor in the total picture of Indian economic development.

No one in India has been more convinced enthusiast for developing the big industries than Pandit Nehru. As the Prime Minister of Indian for 17 years he did everything in his power to industrialise India. But it was also Pandit Nehru's Government which set up a statutory body called the Khadi and Village Industries Commission to promote the development of handspinning and handweaving and innumerable village industries. The Government of India have put may crores of rupees into the hands of this Commission to develop cottage and village industries. The total value of production of khadi and village industries in 1972 was about Rs.120 crores.

Why did Pandit Nehru, the dynamic promoter of industrialization of India, also at the same time help in promoting khadi and village industries? We have the answer from Pandit Nehru himself. While he was on a visit to Gandhigram in South India, he was asked by some Gandhian constructive workers whether they should continue to do their work in khadi and village industries in view of the fact that the Prime Minister was doing everything in his power to industrialize India. Pandit Nehru gave an unhesitating and illuminating reply. He said he certainly believed that India must be industrialized to the utmost of its capacity. He himself was a lover of machines and always fascinated with big machines helping in the mass production of goods. But he added that even when India became as fully industrialized as possible under the conditions in the country and the world, hardly 15 to 20 per cent of the unemployed millions in India would get work in the big industries. Innumerable millions of unemployed people in rural areas would still require to be given work and adequate wages. It is at that point that cottage and village industries must come in, he said. The challenge in India was to take work and wages into millions of village homes. This could be done only through khadi and village industries. Pandit Nehru also referred to another important matter. He said that before the fruits of industrialization made an impact on the life of the common people in India and raised it to a higher standard, many years would have to pass. But if every home and village in the rural area would produce something useful, and village artisans earned to better income, it would at once help in raising the standard of life of the masses. In the case of big industries, the effect would be indirect. But in the case of cottage village industries the impact would be direct and without delay. Pandit Nehru, therefore suggested that the big industries and the small industries should develop harmoniously in a totally integrated plan. This view expressed by Pandit Nehru in Gandhigram put further courage and faith into the programme of khadi and village industries.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that one may cheat God, but no one could cheat arithmetic. He was referring to the arithmetic that nearly 80 per cent of the people of India lived and worked and died in the villages and that no programme of economic development could be a national programme unless it took work and wages into the millions of homes in rural areas. It is amusing to look round today and to find out how many of our educated people still labour under the impression that they can cheat this arithmetic of India. Mahatma Gandhi lived in close touch with cities like Bombay and Ahmedabad, full of many big industries. He knew the meaning and challenge of industrialisation. He never however, sought a conformation between the big and the small industries. His faith was that cottage and village industries in India if and when organized adequately, can challenge the big industries not to indulge in profiteering but to serve the rural areas by coming to terms with cottage and village industries. If Gandhiji had lived some years more than he did, he would certainly have shown how this could be done.

It is now entirely a matter for wise planning, this reconciliation of big and small industries in a country like India with its own special conditions and circumstances.

No one can run away from the realities of life such as that India is a vast country with the second highest population in the world, now standing at nearly 550 millions. The second reality is that 80 per cent of these millions of our people live in villages and scattered over the length and breadth of a vast sub-continent. The majority of them are tillers of the soil. There is no doubt that a few millions of them have come into towns and cities already and will continue to do so. Quite apart from the question whether large migrations of people from rural India to towns and cities are economically sound and worthwhile, it is crystal clear that most of the people will continue to stay in the villages, as far as one can see into the future. The terrific problem as to how adequate work and wages could be taken to the million of rural homes will therefore continue to challenge our planners and administrators. It is obvious that the only economic programme which can reach the millions in the rural areas is the programme of Khadi and village industries. Our Commission has so far succeeded in taking work and wages to a little more than two million people only. Luckily there are many millions in the rural areas who manage to survive in the area of self-employment. The rock-bottom strength of our nation is still in this vast area of self-employment in the rural areas. But the conditions of life in rural areas will deteriorate unless planned and organized work and wages reach them in time. To do this is the challenge before the Government of India and the national planner. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission has already demonstrated the realistic line of advance in this regard. The big question is whether the commission's programme can be enlarged sufficiently and in time to prevent the disaster of a violent revolution. There is enough evidence to show that it can be done. What remains to be proved is that what can be done will be done.

We should cultivate thought and planning to reconcile our big and small industries. We must get rid of the idea that these are essentially contradictory and must weaken each other. We must cultivate the positive idea that the big and small industries can strengthen each other and together can solve the problem of unemployment. We should have the courage to reserve specific areas of production for the big and the small industries. We should not permit the big industries to swallow the small ones. Under wise planning the big industries themselves can strengthen the small industries and *vice versa*. The late Rajagopalachari's idea that sarees and dothis should be reserved for the handloom was a good one, and was based on the approach that reservation of areas for different types of industries will be more rational than indiscriminate development. The major aim would be employment. But employment has to be at a level where those employed can live a better, richer and fuller life. This means that in the area of small industries, we shall have to evolve better and more efficient tools of production and make these available to every artisan. There will be no future for cottage and village industries unless improved and more efficient tools reach every village home. The Ambar Charkha is typical of this effort. The old traditional one-spindle village charkha had given way to the Ambar Charkha of 6, 12 and even more spindles. We have now nearly two lakh of Ambar Charkhas in the rural areas. This has to increase ten-fold before we can make some impact on the economic front. The village pottery, village ghani and artisans in leather, carpentry and blacksmithy, brick-making, etc. must also get involved in improving the techniques of production, right at the village level. An imperative condition is that improved tools of

production should be such, as can be handled by village people without difficulty and serviced by themselves from time to time. Such tools should not become too big for the village. They have to become as efficient and as big as the village can absorb. More than that would mean that village industries will run away to the nearest towns and cities. This will defeat the central purpose.

Mahatma Gandhi was no enemy of machines. He could not, however, tolerate machines being utilized to exploit labour for capitalist profiteering. He wanted the tools of production to be owned by the producer either in the cottage or on the basis of village panchayats. The Gandhian idea of economic development was that no man or woman should be idle, that every village home should produce and become prosperous and happy, and that rural industrialization should become the biggest prop of agriculture. This basic idea still remains absolutely sound for a country like India. Big industries must primarily aim at helping the farmer and the village artisan. Farmers and artisans make up the majority of the Indian people. Therefore big industries can have as big a programme of production as they wish, consistent with the imperative that they produce the smaller machines, the consumer goods, etc. which would go into the rural areas. The great reconciliation between big and small industries will save from the evils both of profiteering capitalism and dictatorial communism. If India succeeds in effecting this reconciliation, she would be holding up the torch for a new social order in the world free of exploitation and violence.

We have had 25 years of Independence. We have done a lot of planning and implementation. We have done a lot of planning and implementation. We have certainly registered progress in economic development in several directions. We have improved our agriculture and we produce more today in our fields and factories than at any time before in our history. We knew it before, but we now know it better, that it is not enough to produce somehow but that we should produce in such a way as to enable the millions of our unemployed to get work and wages. At the end of 25 years of economic development we find that we have on our hands more unemployed than ever before. While production is going up, unemployment is also going up. This is a fatal parallelism in the life of our nation. The monster of unemployment threatens to cancel every step we take forward to achieve national prosperity and well-being. Look at the railways. We run far more trains than ever before, almost 10 times the number before Independence. But there is more over-crowding in our trains than ever before, thanks to population growth and increasing urbanization. Health services have registered improvement in the last 25 years, but there are still millions without elementary health and medical services. Look at our schools. They have multiplied several-fold. But the classrooms are overcrowded and the schools furnish a picture of indiscipline and chaos. We grow more food but more stomachs are hungrier than ever before.

The challenge inherent in the situation is to develop the maximum of labour intensive and decentralized production. Let all the big industries grow and flourish but they will topple without the support of a network of smaller industries spread throughout the length and breadth of India. Our planning has to dig deeper into the hard earth of India, involving the millions both in planning and implementation. We knew this before but at the end of 25 years of freedom this knowledge cries out for urgent appreciation and application.

Mahatma Gandhi with his unerring instinct saw that the best guarantee of prosperity to the masses lay in production and distribution going hand to hand. To produce in a highly centralized manner and then to distribute may be may be unavoidable in certain industries. But it is imperative to combine production and distribution in an integrated process in many industries. This is not only Gandhian economics but sound commonsense in a country like India where millions live scattered in more than five lakhs villages. It is a vain dream to produce necessities of life in a few cities and then distribute the products equitably among the millions in the rural areas without creating dangerous gaps and disastrous vacuums. It is in these gaps and vacuums that the anger and violence of masses which one day can set fire to the whole country. The entire programme of Khadi and village industries is one in which production and distribution largely go hand in hand without creating gaps and vacuums of discontent and frustration. A classical instance is milk supply in India. All available milk is getting concentrated for supply to towns and cities. If in the case of human beings there is some attempt to stop the rush of people from the villages to the towns, in the case of milk supply we see the concentration of milch cattle in and around cities and in a deliberate attempt to achieve such concentration. The result is that milk is drained away from rural areas to town and cities.

It is not impossible for wise planning to disperse industries in such a manner that production and distribution can go together as far as possible. To produce something somewhere and then distribute the product throughout this vast country is not only economically unsound but it sets up a dangerous chain of evils including middlemen and many malpractices. Gandhian economic poses this challenge to modern industry in India. The challenge can be evaded by big industry only at a grave risk to itself and to the country.

In our passion for external uniformity we have given up thinking in terms of regional self-reliance and self-sufficiency. We are caught between two schools, so to say, between the Sarvodaya idea of self-sufficient villages and the national planners' dream of one India common market. There are elements of truth in both the approaches but neither approach is ample enough in terms of the realities of India. We should avoid extremism in concept and practice and evolve a scheme for a network of self-sufficient and self-reliant zones based on the viability of relevant economic resources. The moment national planners develop the courage to pack up the idea of self-reliant, self-sufficient and viable zones, we shall come to terms more and more with the reality of localism which is the core of our economics. The ultimate aim is not merely to produce a grandiose picture of affluence. It must be to bring work and wages within the reach of every man and woman in every area and the final result should be total and worthwhile employment. We have, therefore in a sense, to turn from the economics of money and wealth to that of the well-being and welfare of every section of the community. This really will be Sarvodaya, the great Gandhian concept of the good of all. The Gandhian dream of agriculture and agro-industries building up the foundation of the prosperity and happiness of the people emerges directly from thinking along the above lines. It would of course be futile to rule out other big industries considered essential for national development like steel, heavy electrical and chemicals, etc. But these industries should also become integrated into the vast area of agriculture and agro-industries. We come back therefore to the basic idea of wise national planning in accordance with the genius and realities of our country. But that genius and that reality are inescapable. We shall delude ourselves by thinking we

can run away from them. We shall do so at the peril of all that we wish to create in the new India of our dream. Moral and spiritual values are inherent in the genius of India, and the vast area and our immense population living spread out in lakhs of villages are part of the reality of India. Mahatma Gandhi was conscious both of this genius and this reality. It is our inherent right to amend or modify Gandhi's concepts and practices if and where needed. But the core of Gandhian thought in regard to the genius of India and the reality of India ought to weigh in any national planning.

Is it possible to have such wise national planning? It certainly is. Such planning, capable of building harmony among agriculture, agro-industries and the other big industries, will begin the day planning descends from the heights of New Delhi to where the people live and toil, namely the farms and the workshops and factories. The moment we involve the true representatives of the people at the bottom level, there will be beginning of wise planning. That the imperative of history are compelling India to move in this direction is one of the happiest auguries from the future of India. When that future unfolds itself the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi would be clearer to us than ever before.