



THE GENESIS OF KHADDAR MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract: This research paper focuses on the Genesis of Khaddar movement in Tamil Nadu during the post Non-cooperation phase of Indian freedom struggle. Gandhiji formulated Spinning as a new arena of political action for the village reconstruction. Tamil Nadu passed through a patient ordeal and greatest trial to prove the claim for freedom. The study intends to evaluate the nature of the Khaddar movement and Organization engaged in the spirit of Khaddar propagation in Tamil Nadu. In the saga of the freedom movement these intermittent years were challenged to be the most critical and vital period for the Congress as it had to reserve the energy of the workers, marked by no excitement or demonstration. The purpose of the research is to describe the substantial progress of the constructive Khaddar programme propagated for the iconic ideology turned movement in Tamil Nadu. This study is examined on qualitative analysis and is basically descriptive in nature. The study emphasis the findings of indefatigable work carried out by the Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board and other Independent Organizations in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board had made triumphant progress during the phase between the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movement retaining the unconquerable spirit of the freedom fighters in the wheel of the Congress.

Index Terms – Khaddar propagation, Tamil Nadu Khadi Board, All India Spinners Association (Tamil Nadu), Independent Khaddar Organizations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Khaddar, the product of Charkha had become popular and Universal in India during the struggle for freedom. Realizing the potency of Khaddar as a tool to feed the starving millions, Gandhiji disseminated the Spinning as an effective and speedy means of bringing about a successful boycott against Empire goods. He urged all the village folks to engage in the rotation of the wheel for the rejuvenation of the dyeing spirit. The main goal of the Khaddar movement was to attain swarajya through Charkha. The congress urged to put forth an instantaneous persistent exertion for the constructive work throughout India. Khaddar movement in Tamil Nadu was alike an oasis in the desert, since the leaders found their headway in the spinning franchise. The responds from the Tamil Nadu Congress workers to the constructive programme remained as a significant parameter for determining the success of the Khaddar movement in enabling the diverted spirit into a progressive platform. Khaddar movement had implanted swarajya on unshakable foundations in the Tamil land.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To trace the historical evolution and the growth of Khaddar movement in Tamil Nadu during the Freedom struggle.
- To examine the substantial progress and accomplishment of the Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board as a Spinning franchise.
- To evaluate the role of A. I. S. A. (Tamil Nadu) in commercializing Khadi.
- To explore the significance and value of our indigenous fabric Khadi.
- To appraise endeavour of the independent associations and khaddar enterprises engaged in the Khaddar movement.
- To reveal the intricate work of the unacknowledged Khaddarites in Tamil Nadu.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources have been collected from Newspapers, Journals, and books Published by Government of India. Besides, Secondary sources have been collected from published books pertaining to this study. With these, an attempt has been made to study the Genesis of khaddar movement in Tamil Nadu during the Freedom struggle.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board

The Indian National Congress session held at Cocanada in December 1923 had given a clear and definite mandate for the concentration of the Constructive programme of the Country. Since Charkha remained the foundation of the Constructive work, the Congress urged all the Provincial Congress Committees to take immediate actions for the speedy attainment of Swarajya through Spinning. In 1923, An All-India Khaddar Board was formed with Jammalal Bajaj as the Chairman and Shankerlal Banker as the Secretary with full power to organize and carry Khaddar work throughout India and to supervise and control the Khaddar Boards established by Provincial Congress Committees. The report and statement of accounts shall be presented to All India Congress Committee at its annual meeting and whenever else called for and it will act as a central authority on behalf of A. I. C. C. with regard to Khaddar work. The supreme effort of the Board was to make every man and woman in the country wear Khadi. All India Khadi Board and the working committee of the congress strongly believed that the economic freedom of the country can be brought by Khadi alone which in turn helped to bring about speedy and effective foreign cloth boycott. Besides the Khaddar board was as a network of organization built to connect the remotest self-sufficient villages in the country.

Since the establishment of an All-India Khaddar Board, six such Khaddar Boards were formed in provinces namely Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Rajputana and United Provinces. Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board was instituted by the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee for a period of 3 years. Erode was the base of operation point of the board as it functioned as the Headquarters with "*Charkha*", Erode as its telegraphic address.

E. V. Ramasamy Naicker who was fondly called as "*Periyar*" was the President of the Board during its inception. K. M. Thangaperumal Pillai and N. V. Krishniah Chettiar functioned as its Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Later K. Santhanam officiated as a Secretary of the Board for about 18 months where the Khaddar production had significantly achieved to the figure of about ten lakhs yards a year. Other distinguished members of the board were K. S. Ramasamy Gounder, T. S. S. Rajan, C. Rajagopalachari, C. Muthurenga Mudaliar and K. Santhanam. Rajaji had played a significant role in the resolution of the Constructive programme at the National level. He saw Spinning wheel in identity with the Constructive programme and demanded all the Congress workers to adopt the Charkha as an extra child on behalf of Gandhiji. Auditing was an important league of the board and M. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar was its auditor. N. S. Varadachari, a noble patriot who served as an editor of Young India for some time functioned as the Auditing Inspector of Tamil Nadu and Kerala khaddar board. The board had opened a training department in March 1924 and was placed in charge of Bhai Hlyalwar, an ardent Khadi worker and an ex-student of Sabarmati Khadi School in selected area near Tiruppur where there was good cotton availability. The Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board organized a propaganda by patriotic clads and carried the message of Khaddar. It arranged for the supply of genuine Khadi to the District Congress Committees where there was no sufficient Khadi.

In the year 1924, Shankarlal Banker Secretary of the All-India Khadi Board toured Tamil Nadu along with Jammalal and Maganlal Gandhi for the propagation of Khaddar in Southern states. They carried home the message of Mahatma Gandhi and the Charkha to the masses and espoused the Khadi ideal- the ideal of *Vastra- Swatantrya* (self-sufficiency) and demanded people not only to hike the producing capacity of Khadi but also increase the local consumption due to increased output. The leaders penetrated villages and had long talks with the Spinners and Weavers spreading new hope and fervor for the Khaddar work. Decentralization was a significant policy which the board carried wherever they toured. It demanded people to consume maximum of Khaddar, for cloth its native people before exporting to other regions. It aroused the spirit for spinning and call to people to spin rather to look around for Khaddar.

The Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board had an entirety of 28 Khaddar production centres. The highest numbers of Centres were based in Coimbatore district and the rest were stationed at Salem, Ramnad, Tanjore, South Arcot, Tinnevely, Madura etc. Tiruppur was the premium and a nerve centre for Khaddar production in Tamil Nadu which had produced between Fifteen to Twenty thousand rupees worth of Khadi per month in 1924. The sales and production reacted upon each other as the demand kept pace with the production. In 1925, the Board had aided Six centres all over Tamil Nadu:

1. Kongu Hand Spinning & Weaving Co., Tiruppur
2. Gandhi Ashram, Pudupalayam
3. Congress Khadi Depot, Mannargudi
4. Madura Swadeshi Co. Branch, Dindigul
5. Congress Khaddar Sala, Kallakurichi
6. Anonymous, Omalur

The Independent Khaddar merchants and producers ranging Twenty-One played a significant role in boosting the Khaddar sale. At Kovur, a model training school functioned with youths trained in ginning, carding, and spinning. Tamil Nadu produced varieties of Khaddar specialties namely dhoties, striped shirtings, printed shawls, double thread coatings, chintz bed sheets, carpets, Lace & silk embroidered angavastrams, sarees, plain blankets, drill towels etc. In addition, the Board tried to introduce coloured Khaddar saris.

The All-India Khaddar Board had examined the yarns spun by spinners of various provinces and sent as a Congress subscription. The yarn from Tamil Nadu was of uniformly good quality and competes with Bengal in Quantity. The Vykam volunteers contribution was noteworthy since the yarn sent by them was of fairly large quantity. Among them, Minakshi Sundaram and Shanmuga Sundaram Pillay maintained distinction as the winner of the first class with honours by their magnificent contribution of spinning 2040 yards of 97 counts and 2520 yards of 80 counts yarn respectively.

Since spinning and sending yarns to All India Khaddar Board had started, the Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board had increase in number of spinners from 90 to 456 in September, 1924. Efforts were taken to mark improvement in the quality of the yarn spun. By October 1924 Tamil Nadu has 1321 representatives in total. 151 was the highest count of yarn in the country and it had gone to the credit of Meenakshi sundharam of Tamil Nadu. The highest count ranged to 151. Rajaji sent 4100 yards of very good 14 count yarn.

The Board appealed to people to contribute generously for Khadi work for the economic and political emancipation of the country. Full time competent Khadi workers were secured to help organize Khadi work on sound basis with the approval of All-India Khaddar Board. The Spinning Franchise was setup as a branch of the Congress Working Committee to render every possible assistance for the growth of the Khaddar movement. K. Santhanam, the then Secretary of Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board appealed that Khaddar should be the exclusive wear of a Congressman for all occasions while the Self-spun Khaddar to remain the livery for 'Congress and Public Occasions'.

4.2 All India Spinners Association (Tamil Nadu)

In the year 1925, the All-India Congress Committee in a meeting at Patna established an expert organization called All India Spinners Association for the development of Hand-spinning and khaddar with independent existence and power. The council took over the funds and assets belonging to the All- India Khaddar Board and all Provincial Khaddar Boards. The All-India Spinners Association along with its provincial branches and several departmental centres of work was the nodal primary agency engaged in the Khaddar work. Besides carrying out work at its own centres, it was also engaged in supervising and coordinating the work of other Khaddar organisations. The fine Khaddar organisations in Andhra & Tiruppur were the most among which accounts for 40% of the total production of Khaddar in the country. The remaining 60% of production & 90% of retail sales work were done by the Association and the Independent Organisations.

Province	Production		Sale	
	1925 -1926	1926-1927	1925 -1926	1926-1927
Tamil Nadu & Kerala	8,94,182	10,94,633	9,42,446	10,73,021

Source: A. I. S. A. Annual report 1926-1927

There has been considerable progress in the production and sales of khaddar in all provinces during the Constructive period. But the progress of Tamil Nadu had remarkably rose and stood in foremost position. The perusal of the above figure was the strong evidence indicating the progress of khaddar movement in Tamil Nadu. The year 1926-1927 faced general reduction in Khaddar price in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Bengal, Punjab and Ajmer. The ruling prices in Tamil Nadu were about 7 to 8 % less than those of previous year.

The Khaddar workers census was undertaken in 1925, where All India Spinners Association (Tamil Nadu) had twenty-two Khaddar workers with a maximum pay of Rs.80. A Carding institution was setup at Karikeri by the Tamil Nadu khaddar board which moves from district to district and invites candidates to join the institution for the term of their stay at a particular place and learn carding and spinning.

It had to be admitted that the progress of the Khaddar movement was anticipated to be much larger. But the operation of various factors led to the shortage. The communal disturbances also proved to be one of the factors which had not left even the Khadi movement untouched. The improvement in the quality of the yarn and weaving had also left a temporary effect of reducing the production for some times.

4.3 Penetrating the Interior

The production centers of All India Spinners Association (A. I. S. A.) Tamil Nadu covered nearly 1177 villages out of 2831 villages in all provinces in 1926. The workers in the Khaddar movement largely consisted of persons who gave up their profession or their studies at the call of non co –operation and have been engaged in constructive programmeme of Gandhi. These workers maintained admirable patience and diligence and formed the main core of the Khaddar movement. There were almost 435 workers in the central office and branches of the association. Under the new khadi service instituted by the council in December 1925, an addition of 35 workers was given training in Khadi work. Other than the association there were 313 workers serving under the independent public organization like the Pratisthan. Among the aided organization, Gandhi Ashram, Tiruchengodu had enrolled 10 workers out of 313.

In the year 1927, Tamil Nadu stood foremost both in Khaddar production and sales in India. It produced nearly half of the total Khaddar production in the country. Tiruppur turned to be the chief centre of production in Tamil Nadu and the Khaddar produced there was in great demand in all parts of the country. It also met the needs of the less developed provinces. Due to the superior cotton used and expert weaving, the cloth produced a peculiar softness and attractiveness not produced by the Khaddar clothes of all the other provinces even though the quality and prices of the cloth were comparatively very favorable with other provinces clothes. About 40% of the Tamil Nadu Khaddar production was exported to other provinces & overseas while remaining 60% was consumed within the province itself.

Kanur had been the centre of Khaddar work in Coimbatore district ever since the movement began. Mr. Balaji Rao, a lawyer who had suspended his practice at the first call of non-cooperation had the credit of pioneering the Khaddar work at Kanur. In the year 1924, the Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board brought Kanur under its direct supervision and management with a Khaddar production of Rs.1000 worth per week on a capital of Rs. 3000/-. The Khaddar works carried here not only borne excellent result in commercial production, but also fostered the habit of self-spinning and Khaddar wearing in the Village.

The next biggest centre of work in the province was Gandhi Ashram, Pudupalayam in Salem district. Rajaji was instrumental in propagating Khaddar movement deep into the villages of Tamil Nadu. As a firebrand of no changers group, Rajaji started the Gandhi Ashram at Pudupalayam for the purpose of promoting Gandhian constructive programmeme. Rajaji opined, "Constructive work and nothing else now. Other things however tempting, however speedy-looking and attractive shall not take us out of the path of construction which the Congress with one voice has ordered".

He urged every Congress worker to select the village and spin all the time for winning Swarajya through Charkha. P. K. Rathnasabapathy, a Mittadar of Pudupalayam and an ardent devotee of Rajaji donated four acres of land for the establishment of the Ashram. Rajaji functioned as its director with K. Santhanam as incharge of Khadi production, who formerly officiated as the Secretary of Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board.

Other than these two regions, there were other areas which possessed good amenities for Khaddar production but had not been quite developed. The most significant centres in other areas were Kallakurich in S. Arcot District, Tisiyanvilai in Tinnevely & Rajapalayam in Ramnad District.

Kallakurichi was directly supervised by the A. I. S. A. The counts of the yarn spun were upto 25 counts using Nadan cotton. The average monthly production of Khaddar at this centre was Rs. 1200. There was also a small independent organisation named Co-operative stores functioned here. In the year 1924, when the members of the All-India Khadi Board visited Salem where Siddhraj, a weaver by caste conducted six country pit looms on handspun yarn with 12 workers employed on wages. He had made investment of about fifteen hundred rupees and collected yarns from Kallakurichi, Dindigal and Trichinopoly for an average of One rupee Nine Anna's per pound. The owner earned his livelihood then for about two and half years and the demand for his produce were always greater. This was one among the numerous successful indigenous factory that sprang up after the birth of the Khadi movement.

Rajapalayam in Ramnad District was the centre acclaimed for fine Khadi in Tamil Nadu. It was worked by Independent Organisations. Fine Khaddar with lace and silk border were manufactured with the yarn of upto 60 counts. This area produced Khaddar for an average of Rs. 4000 per month together by all the three principal organisations. Tisiyanvilai was centre of a region which almost rivals with Tiruppur in its amenities for production. The yarn count here was upto 40 counts out of Nadan cotton variety. Independent producer had done small work producing an average of Rs.350 worth per month.

Nevertheless, Tiruppur remains the Chief centre of work in Tamil Nadu Producing nearly 3/4th of total Khaddar production in Tamil Nadu. The A. I. S. A. ran a Central Khadi Vastralaya at Tirupur. Besides this, it overran small depots at Puliampatti, Avanashi, Cheyur, Uttukuli, Kinathukidavu, Padiyur, which acted as fleeder depots to the Central Vastralaya. It also had a production centre at its headquarters in Erode. On January 1924, the Congress Working Committee passed resolution granting loans to Provincial khaddar boards to provide sufficient security by way of *lien* on stocks and assurance of decisive utilization of funds were obtained. The premier Independent Organisation which functioned the foremost was The Kongu Hand-spinning & Hand-weaving Co. Ltd., to this organization, A. I. S. A. granted a loan of Rs. 15,000.

4.4 A New Orientation

Efforts had also been made in several provinces to find increasingly a market for their goods with in their own area. Almost all the provinces were disposing their production with in the province itself and had not exported any part of their production, these efforts had met with fruitful results in Tamil Nadu where the local sales had kept pace with the expansion in production. The sale within the province had amounted to over 60% of the total production accounting to nearly 10 ½ lakhs in 1926. Some of the provincial branches found itself unable to cope with the demand due to fall in production and increase in demand. The hawking scheme had taken advantage in Tamil Nadu there were 71 hawkers and the value of khadi hawked is 63628-6-10. A sum of Rs.5, 612-3-7 was earned as a commission by the hawkers in Tamil Nadu.

Year	Province	Carders	Spinners	Weavers
1926	India	627	83339	5193
	Tamil Nadu	-	16348	1264

Source: A. I. S. A. Annual report 1926-1927

The quantity of production estimates the number of Spinners in the provinces. The A. I. S. A. had instructed all the departments and independent organizations to maintain a separate figure for the census of Spinners enrolled in the Khaddar production. It was found that not all the spinners were exclusively registered under the ageis of A.I.S.A. and only a part of their yarn was taken up by the recognized centres of Khaddar production. The carders and weaver's figures were found to be accurate in all the provinces. In Tamil Nadu, the spinners card their cotton themselves.

Thus, Khadi had appealed to the rural labour in Tamil Nadu in all economic sense, to the wheels which were worked in the rural cottages in a comparatively shorter span of years. The Khaddar movement had revitalized the manufacturing power of the skeletonized and poverty struck weaving communities.

V. CONCLUSION

Tamil Nadu Khaddar Board had taken the lead in the Khaddar propagation which was a stupendous attempt to bind the poor and the rich with the bond of indissoluble service. It was the sign of the times that most young men and women of India were meticulously engaged in Khaddar work with the selflessness of reviving the old traditions of this land. The service for Khaddar had been considered a matter of pride during the service for the nation. Tamil Nadu had shown the ray of hope and made headway by regulating and improving spinning, resulting the scope for perennial progress of the Khaddar movement in the impending years.

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