

THE INDIAN COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

(Its Past, Present, and Future)
(With which is Incorporated the 1937 Annual)

By
M. P. GANDHI

Extract from the Foreword by—

Sir PURSHOTAMDAS THAKURDAS, Kt., C.I.E., M.B.E.

“There are several lessons to be drawn from the development of this industry, and Mr. M. P. Gandhi's present volume, to my mind, fills a real need. * * * *”

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As is evident from the bibliography, the author of the present work has done laborious research into the subject, and thrown a flood of light on the vicissitudes of the Industry in the past, by his having access to several not easily accessible literature and documents. He has also made several useful suggestions for the amelioration of the cotton industry of the present time. I congratulate him for writing such an excellent monograph on the subject and hope that those interested in this industry will find it a really useful publication."

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FOREWORD

By

Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Kt., C.I.E., M.B.E.

The Textile Industry in India dates from time immemorial, and the romance of this industry can always be read with great interest and considerable instruction by many. There are several lessons to be drawn from the development of this industry in India, and Mr. M. P. Gandhi's present volume, to my mind, fills a real need.

The Textile Industry, as an indigenous handicraft industry reached its zenith centuries back in India. At one time, the textile manufactures of India were a fashion and luxury even in Europe. That the Industrial Revolution was bound to alter the character of this industry goes without saying, but due to political circumstances principally, the geographical centre of the cotton industry was shifted afar, and the age-old handicraft industry came to a pathetic and almost violent and untimely end. Instead, therefore, of a gradual transition to the Machine Era, we have in India a gap after 1760, which threatened to be permanent. But the genius of the people slowly and steadily adapted itself to the new conditions, and the foundations of the existing cotton textile industry in India were laid in the Western Presidency.

The story of the fortunes and vicissitudes of this industry, reborn as it seemed, is intermingled with politics. Lancashire, the new home of the industry, from the start, remained hostile and apprehensive of the industry in India, and pulled the political strings to monopolise for herself the Indian market. This comparatively short-sighted attitude was based upon the fallacious notion that the permanent interests of England were opposed to those of India, an attitude which, admittedly, has not disappeared even to-day. This had three-fold effects. Economically, by keeping down India industrially, the purchasing power of the masses was restricted, and, so, automatically, also the market for Lancashire goods in India. Secondly, the retarding of industrial growth in India had a stimulating effect on the growth of industries in non-Empire countries, competition from which, in course of time, grew to be so effective that England was forced to protect herself by Imperial Preference Tariffs from being literally ousted

from the Empire markets. This retribution was all the more tragic as, according to the liberal traditions in which the Lancashire industry grew up, power to compete was considered to be the only *raison d'être* of even the existence of an industry. Thirdly, this attitude led to much political discontent and distrust of British rule in India, and eventually burst out in boycott of Lancashire goods as a political weapon.

Keen controversy and much heart-burning surrounds several of the acts of omission and commission in the handling of this industry by the Government of India which was not quite a free agent and had to take instructions from Whitehall influenced as the latter was by Lancashire. But it is refreshing to note, from some records of British members of the Governor-General's Executive Council, that at certain critical periods, they stood up for the Indian Textile Industry in a manner which must be the admiration of Indians for all time.

To-day, in a world harassed by exchange restrictions and tariff barriers of all kinds, the full development and expansion of the Textile Industry promises to be the best solution of the marketing problem of the cotton-grower of India, who finds several of his previous markets being shut out for some reason or other. I am not an advocate of economic isolation, but India cannot overlook the dangers of too much economic dependence.

Mr. Gandhi may not claim to have dealt with the question exhaustively in all its varied aspects, but there is little doubt that a study of the Textile Industry, as he has brought it out, would be useful to the country at large. As to the constructive work to be done in this direction in the future, I consider helpful suggestions to be invaluable, and I feel that every publication which aims at drawing attention to the defects which existed till now, and to the undoubted possibilities of the industry in the future, should be welcomed by the Indian public. I have every confidence that Mr. M. P. Gandhi's contribution in the pages which follow will be useful in this direction.

“ Suneeta,”

Ridge Road,
Bombay, 17th May, 1937,

Purshotamdas Thakurdas,

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It was in 1930 that I published my monograph on the Indian Cotton Textile Industry—its Past, Present and Future. It was written by me in the year 1924 at the Benares Hindu University (where I was then a post-graduate student pursuing my studies for the M. A. Degree in Political Economy and Political Philosophy), for submission in competition for the Ashburner prize of the Bombay University, which was awarded to me in 1925.

Having a few copies in stock and finding that there was a keen demand for it, I have now decided to publish it again, and in doing so, I have taken the opportunity of *thoroughly* revising it, and of bringing it *completely up-to-date*. In the earlier portion of the text, I have made some additions also, based on the recent discoveries in Mohenjodaro in Sind.

In this monograph I have attempted to present a faithful picture of the history as well as the economics of the Industry at its various stages commencing from the remote Vedic period upto the present time, and have come to the conclusion that the Indian Cotton Textile Industry—the biggest industry in India, manned, controlled and financed largely by the nationals of the country, deserves adequate protection and help at the hands of the Government who have given it protection in a halting and spasmodic manner during the last few years. I cannot help feeling that if the industry were given a *liberal* measure of protection for a few years and put in a position whereby it would be able to meet competition from cloth manufactured in Japan as well as Lancashire, it would be possible for it within a brief period to develop its efficiency to a stage which would do away with the necessity of imposition of heavy import duties on foreign piecegoods. The Indian Cotton mill industry, with the assistance of the Handloom industry, would easily be able to meet almost entirely the demand of cloth in this country, and there is no reason why India which produces such large quantities of raw cotton should have to depend upon other countries for the supply of piecegoods, manufactured in certain cases, from her own cotton, for her own requirements. Any unbiassed observer would be able to see that the Government of India have never taken a thoroughly nationalist outlook in regard to the establishment and consolidation of the Indian Cotton Textile Industry and have always been hesitating in taking suitable action, being afraid as to what reactions their policy in relation to the tariff duties would produce in the minds of Lancashire. Due to such weakness in the attitude of the Government of India, who are

the custodians of the interests of this country, towards this indigenous industry, Lancashire has been encouraged to become more and more bold and has been pressing for adoption of preferential measures which would enable her to retain an important position in the supply of cloth to this country, to the detriment of the home industry, and other competitors in the Indian market. With the expansion of the mill production as also the handloom production under the impetus of the spirit of *Swadeshi*, and the efforts made by the Village Industries Association, established under the auspices of the Indian National Congress, and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, it is hardly necessary for India to depend upon foreign countries for the supply of her requirements of piecegoods, to any large extent, as diversified kinds of cloth needed by the people can be produced inside the country. I wish that even at this late stage, the Government of India may be persuaded to look at this question of protection to the Indian Cotton Textile Industry, with which the fortunes of a large number of people in this country are closely bound, from an entirely nationalistic point of view, and that they may be induced to take bold measures for assisting the industry to overcome competition from other countries, at the earliest date. I also feel that it is equally essential for the indigenous industry to increase its efficiency and put its own house in order, so that it may be able to get rid of her dependence on Governmental help to meet competition from foreign countries, at as early a date as possible.

Encouraged by the very welcome response that my Annuals on the Indian Sugar Industry have received from the public during the last three years, I have felt that it would perhaps be equally useful if I published an Annual surveying the condition of the Indian Cotton Textile Industry, from year to year. There is no one source at present from where authoritative and up-to-date information pertaining to the Indian Cotton Textile Industry could be had, and I thought that it would be handy for all interested in the industry, if any such publication would be available annually. In the hope of supplying a keenly felt want of the general public, interested in the Cotton Textile Industry, I have decided to make this publication an annual one. I cherish the hope that Members of the legislatures, both Central and Provincial, students and professors of the various Universities, and the general public including investors interested in studying the development and progress of this industry, will find it an useful and indispensable book of reference—at once authoritative and up-to-date, portraying in a clear perspective the present position of the industry. The 1938 edition of the Indian Cotton Textile Industry will therefore not contain any discussion on the earlier period of the Cotton Textile

Industry, as the present monograph does. It will only trace the vicitudes of the industry during the last few years and review the position of the industry during the current year. This annual survey will also comprise a detailed discussion on the course of the mill industry as also of the Handloom weaving and Hand-spinning industry during the year, will refer to imports and exports, cultivation, improvement, etc. of raw cotton, the general policy of the State in relation to the industry, and will contain relevant information about the state of the industry in other countries of the World.

In order to enable one to have a bird's eye view of the industry without going through the large number of pages of reading matter, I have appended a few tables at the beginning of the book under the heading "The Cotton Textile Industry at a Glance" which gives in a nutshell relevant statistical information, authoritative and up-to-date, in regard to the Indian Cotton Textile Industry. I hope this will be found interesting and helpful by a large number of readers.

I have also given for ready reference by investors, a table on pages 71-74, showing the dividends paid by a few of the well-known mills during the last few years.

In the Appendix, I have also given a complete list of the Cotton Mills in India along with the names of Managing Agents etc. in the hope that it will be found useful by a large number of persons connected with the industry.

To facilitate the work of general readers, I have placed at the beginning of the book detailed contents, and at the end, a carefully compiled copious index, and for the students at some of the Universities in India where this book is recommended for study for the Degree and Post-Graduate classes, I have also given a brief, select, and up-to-date Bibliography. From my personal experience as an examiner for some years for the Commerce Degree courses of the Lucknow and Allahabad Universities, and of the Diploma course of the Commercial Examinations conducted by the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay, I have felt that the need of a good Bibliography on a prescribed subject of study for students is indeed very great, particularly as a student is easily induced to refer to a publication in original if its correct name and title is handy, and if he is assured that it is likely to contain some suitable or commendable or relevant material on the subject engaging his attention. I also feel that it is very essential, in order to impart a scientific training of the mind, to

encourage the desire in a student to refer for himself to authoritative publications on a subject whenever possible, rather than rely, which he often does, on casual information purveyed in stray reading matter, which at times is incorrect, and even misleading.

I am thankful to Mr. R. D. Mihra, publicity officer of the Indian Central Cotton Committee, Bombay, who has been good enough to furnish me a lot of material on the chapter on cultivation of cotton and has indeed also been good enough to revise that chapter.

I am very grateful to Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas for having been good enough to write a foreword to this publication in the midst of his multifarious engagements and particularly on the eve of his departure for London to attend the Conference to be held there in June 1937 for the revision of the Indo-British Trade Agreement.

The publication of this monograph has been delayed due to the late conclusion of the Indo-Japanese Agreement, and to my desire to pass under review the terms of this Agreement.

I hope to be able to publish the next Indian Cotton Textile Industry Annual by February-March, 1938.

I shall feel grateful if readers will send me suggestions indicating the directions in which the next Indian Cotton Textile Industry Annual, to be published in 1938, could be made more useful.

I also wish to thank the management of the National City Bank of New York, Calcutta, for allowing me in my spare time to study, write and publish books and articles on subjects of current economic and general importance in which I have interested myself. I have felt encouraged in the pursuit of this hobby which I have developed in recent years, due to my belief that the publication of such articles and books of topical interest, besides giving me food for thought and helping me in keeping myself well posted on current economic questions, has met with some appreciation—judging from appreciative forewords to my publications, and favourable reviews in important journals—from the readers, and to my hope that such publications will be of some help in crystallising public opinion on complex questions of considerable importance to the country. I shall feel amply rewarded if this hope is fulfilled even to a small extent.

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Dated 31st May, 1937.

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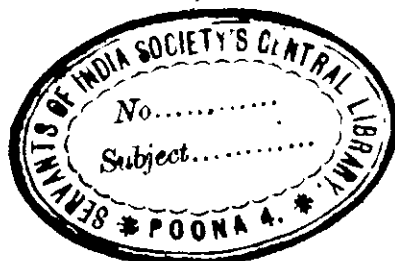
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BY

M. P. GANDHI

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The Indian Cotton Textile Industry

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Printed by P. Ghose at the Commercial
Gazette Press, 6, Parshibagan Lane,
Calcutta, and Published by M. P.
Gandhi, 14-B, Heysham Road,
P. O. Elgin Road,
CALCUTTA
