

DEATH SENTENCE

Indian courts award death sentences only in the rarest of the rare cases. The murder of an unsuspecting husband by his wife along with her lover is surely one such case. It's not only a cold blooded murder but also a violation of the sanctity of marriage and breaking of trust. This case is of a trial court in Meerut, UP, awarding death to Muskan and Sahil after convicting them of murdering Saurabh Rajput, dismembering his body and stuffing in it a blue drum to destroy evidence. Both convicts are parents to daughter and yet committed a heinous crime. Sometimes the court verdicts reflect public opinions and emotions and this one is one such case. The killer duo has stooped so low that they appear to be inhuman or devoid of emotions and morality. Cases like this are behind the youth opting out of marriages and relying on live-in relationships.

KOCHI SYNAGOGUE CASE

An attempted arson close to a synagogue in Kochi is a serious incident more so in view of the recent Flydubai and related incidents. It's well known and now openly acknowledged that Jews appreciate India as the only part of the globe where the community has never faced any anti-Semitism or hostility. While this is the way of life in India, for the religious community which faced holocaust, it's a big thing. And this aspect of India was recently highlighted further with Indian Captain Smit Machchhar's extraordinary bravery in saving passengers and crew onboard a flight to Tel Aviv from his terrorist co-pilot. No wonder those behind the aborted Flydubai hijacking and plane crashing and also jealous of India's rise could not be happy about the turn of events. Kerala police said the suspect was given the task by some people and he did it for money. Indian police and intelligence have to remain alert on elements that can think of harming Jewish places of worship in India.



Ms. Roop Rashi and Dr. Nitesh Dhawan

We are proud citizens of India -today the sixth largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP. Much of the economic growth is driven by the MSME sector contributing one-third in the overall GDP of the country. Herein again, major share comes from rural micro enterprises. The rural economy mainly relies on cottage industries like Khadi and handloom sector along with handicraft products manufactured from rural artisans. At a time when the world is grappling with inequality, climate change and resource depletion while in the domain of IT and software, AI is on relentless march gobbling up jobs, Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) can play an important role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthening the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat by enabling employment at differential skill levels, with low resource use locally mitigating migration too.Khadi, Hand spun and Hand woven, has been the Soul of Bharat. The responsible production is resource efficient on energy, water utilising natural fibres. The potential to be the driver of growth is being recognised steadily, albeit, slowly.

Our industry signifies a rich cultural legacy from ancient times, exhibiting a diverse artistic sense with exemplary skill and personal touch of human emotions. Various written treatise pertaining to the Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Thalia (by Greek historian Herodotus) and Kautilya have mentioned not only spinning and weaving but also the high quality of silk and cotton. While cotton has been cited in Ramayana and aligned to characteristics of Saint, the spectrum of weaves reflect the rich cultural tapestry. Through Khadi 'Production by Masses' using hand spun and hand woven, was utilised by Mahatma Gandhiji to confront Mass production by the Colonialists.The fabric of freedom is becoming aspirational fashion statement today because of its unique characteristics of being natural, comfortable and sustainable. Its handmade character gives it an individuality and hence it does not need to compete with generic production in volumes. The journey of Khadi-from a symbol of swadeshi and freedom to a contemporary fashion and lifestyle choice especially for environmentally aware new generation -demonstrates how tradition can adapt to changing consumer preferences.In fact, Tradition of near source production, which is more sustainable, is by default, intrinsic strength in Khadi ecosystem.In 21st Century, KVIC takes inspiration in our mandate from the clarion call of Hon'ble Prime Minister, "Khadi for Nation, Khadi for Fashion and Khadi for Transformation" while contributing to farm, fibre and market connect.

It has to be noted that Hand spinning is the cardinal differentiator between Khadi and Handlooms. Since Yarn is also done by hand, the labour-intensive nature production enables employment to large section of people.The Khadi institutions, the aggregators of the hand-made hank produced in distributed architecture, have been assisted by Khadi and Village industries over last seven decades.Capacity enhancement through Skilling and up-skilling is being done through KVIC's departmental and non-departmental training centers. With

two-third of the rural population in the country, this sector holds larger significance as it provides ample opportunities for rural entrepreneurs. Such interventions directly advance SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by creating income-generating opportunities for people at the grassroots.Recent measures, including increases in spinning and weaving wages from April 2025 by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), incremental support to improving working tools, conditions, tools infra, marketing interfaces, further demonstrate the emphasis on improving artisan incomes and making traditional livelihoods attractive and economically sustainable. The aggregate production has reached ~Rs 4000 crore(approx.) with Sales reaching about Rs 8000 crore(approx.) due to constant strengthening of the Khadi and Village industries (VI) Ecosystems over period, especially last one decade.

Marching forward, the comfort fabric has been evolving into new categories and aspirational statements. Its transformation is evident in the emergence of Khadi denim, designer saris and bridal wear, contemporary shirts and trousers, and collections by mainstream brands such as Raymond and Peter England.Centre of Excellence for Khadi (NIET, Delhi), an initiative between Ministry of MSME and Textiles, has developed 2129 Khadi design collections in the multiple categories of apparels, collections of home-made-ups, featuring prints, weaves, embroidery, and painting, sari designs and continues to enable the Khadi Institutions' aspirants through CoEK knowledge portal. Our foray into infant wear is inspired by the fact that global infant and baby wear segment is expected to be exceeding \$60 billion by 2030 (CAGR between 5-8.1%) and there would be priority to organic cotton, hypoallergenic fabrics and non-toxic manufacturing processes.Navyug Khadi designs reflecting positioning of Brand for 21st Century India, launched at National Crafts Museum & Hastkala Academy, Pragati Maidan with 710 new products presenting the "New Khadi of New India" in a contemporary and innovative manner along with Khadi Knowledge Portal.A collection of Wellness/Yoga wear 'Svadhya' has been recently launched on International Yoga Day to attract all age groups from Gen Z to young at heart.

Employment generation in Khadi requires very low investment. The assistance is being provided through schemes viz. Khadi Vikas Yojana, Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, PMEGPenabling KVI institutions/units in providing employment opportunities.

The government is giving a major push to revive traditional industries by providing them all the necessary support including financial assistance, working capital facilitation, quality raw material supporttraining, tool-kits, wage compensation, marketing support, promotion of digital payments and social security benefits.As per the evaluation study conducted by EDII, Ahmedabad, in its report submitted in January, 2026, over 75% of artisans across all the schemes reported a measurable increase in income post-intervention and a stable year-round employment was created for artisans who previously depended on seasonal or migratory labour which actually helped in reducing the migration of labour.Artisans trained under food processing, agarbatti, and Honey Mission have diversified into new product categories-such as essential oils, scented candles, or value-added honey derivatives.This diversification has improved resilience against local market fluctuations.

Khadiirectly addresses women's empowerment and hence aligns to Inclusive development. Around 80 percent of around

half a million Khadi artisans are women.Female participation was found to be dominating in GVV schemes, particularly in Agarbatti, Handmade Paper, Honey Mission, and Service Industry segments according to the study. Therefore, the engagement of a large number of women in any capacity in this sector has ensured direct remunerations for them, thus empowering them through financial independence and improved self-worth both within and outside of their homes.By enabling women to participate in productive economic activity, Khadi contributes directly to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) while also helping reduce social and economic disparities under SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

The handmadeindustry has a growing global demand and huge export potential which needs to be tapped. With its quantum and varieties of traditional handmade products, India occupies an inevitable place in the world. 85% of the global handloom production occurs here and the 'intrinsic value' can be leveraged for 'higher returns'. Other handloom nations like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Indonesia manufacture very limited range of products but these are mainly for domestic production. India has the huge potential to cater to the global demand of Khadi and handloom products based on its demographic advantage and diversified cultural heritage.Consumers around the world are showing growing interest in products that are handmade, traceable, natural and environmentally responsible. This presents an opportunity to reposition Khadi and handmade products not merely as traditional goods, but as premium products that embody authenticity, strong backstory of craftsmanship and sustainability.KVIC has got registered as EPC on the Trade portal of Consulate General of India at New York, USA under Ministry of External Affairs. KVIC has initiated registering the progressive KIs with EXIM licenses and also engaging with Consulates in India for exposures to our strengths, which should enable building bridges.

While Khadi has its recognition, the Brand is being protected through registering trade Mark in other countries so that our producers and value chains are protected. Furtherunique Branding, Geographical Identification (GI) tag has been recently awarded to Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in respect of Ponduru Khadi which will enhance its value realisation for products of unique cotton and products spun and woven through equally unique process. The inaugural BRICS MSME Forum held in Agra this year exhibited specialized and premium products, including GI-tagged Ponduru Khadi, Bharat Kasturi Cotton, Bengal Muslim and naturally coloured cotton products.

We need to ensure Quality and assurance in our products for enhancing new gen Z customer acquisition, retention and higher value returns for such niche products . Towards this end,

the department's Central Sliver Plant (CSP), established nearly three and a half decades ago, are being modernized. Of the five currently operational CSPs, the plants located in Chittaradurga, Karnataka, and Kuttur, Kerala, have completed modernization and are operational.The Sliver plant in Karnataka utilises Solar energy for 50% of the requirement while wind power is being explored to make the production totally environmentally supportive.

This approach resonates with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) by connecting traditional enterprises with design, technology, modern markets and evolving supply chains.Technology Up-gradation of Khadi Institutions' Production Infrastructure and technology-based Common Facility Centres (CFCs) are proposed to strengthen Village Industries clusters through shared infrastructure and modern

processing facilities. KVIC is enabling Traceability solutions across the value chains which should enable integrating IT to tradition and attract new gen interest in the production ecosystem also.

Last but not the least, the cottage industry is eco-friendly in nature being energy efficient, water efficient and use of natural fibres/ colours .Khadi is an eco- friendly fabric with very less carbon footprint and environmentally sustainable. The measurement of this is being studied by premier Institutions (IIT, IIMs) to enable suitably factoring in the product as well as Brand promotion narrative to agile new gen consumer -domestic and international.The focus of the world economies has recently shifted towards taking initiatives with a more pragmatic approach in ensuring development that has social and environmental connotations alongside economic growth. The ethical aspects of materialistic expansion have drawn attention of the policy makers in the wake of alarming environmental concerns, rising inequalities, hunger and poverty and inequitable distribution of resources. The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals adopted by World nations in 2015 underline the course of action for achieving the development based on poverty eradication, judicious use of environmental resources, and distributive social justice.KVIC in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (ICAR-CIRCOT),is actively exploring initiatives aimed at developing naturally coloured cotton varieties. This approach aligns with eco-friendly practices by minimizing water usage, chemical pollution, and energy consumption associated with traditional dyeing processes. It would be therefore pertinent to give impetus to this sector which has the capacity to provide sustainable livelihood solutions.At a time when the fashion industry is under increasing pressure to address waste, pollution and excessive resource consumption, Khadi offers an alternative philosophy; produce thoughtfully, consume responsibly and value the skill behind every product. In fact, whatever fibre or filament, by nature (eg plastic wrapper) and / or length (eg desi cotton) cannot be converted to Yarn by mechanised spinning industry, can be done through hand charkha and can enable 'in loop' as well as 'out of loop' recycling and upcycling and thereby contribute to additional employment categories in hand spinning.

This directly connects Khadi with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Sustainable agricultural practices, including responsible cotton cultivation, can further strengthen its contribution to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by promoting more sustainable rural ecosystems. With these potential, constant support and promotion would keep making the supply chains stronger, deeper and wider in delivering responsibly to human society.

The larger message is simple; sustainability, neednot always come from the newest technology only. Sometimes, it can emerge from practices that communities have preserved for centuries that modern society is rediscovering. Khadi represents precisely such a possibility. It combines heritage with innovation, employment with entrepreneurship, women's empowerment with social inclusion, and economic activity with environmental responsibility.We, at KVIC, are trying to uncover, demystify, reassert and reinforce that MAGIC woven by Artists of Threads, our spinners and Artisans, for the environmentally conscious world.

Congress must end its inertia to lead the INDIA bloc in these testing times

Anil Anand

There is good and bad news for the Congress, which is struggling hard to shed inertia and indecisiveness and emerge from its own cobweb. The more it tries, though through feeble attempts, the more it remains the same, without realising the need to become battle-ready for the coming electoral contests. While circumstances are fast changing in favour of the Grand Old Party (GOP), its leadership seems mostly unaware of the role that the party, as the premier opposition party, is expected to play at such a crucial juncture.

As the crescendo has gathered stormy proportions over the functioning of the Election Commission of India (ECI)—a front-ranking constitutional body responsible for conducting free and fair elections—in a totally opaque and centralised manner, the INDIA combine of opposition parties finally coming together is a significant development. It is another matter that they shared the table after a couple of electoral setbacks and regular sniping at each other. However, circumstances have perhaps left them with no option but to come together and resolve to fight back to protect the "sanctity of the vote".

If the INDIA bloc meeting has thrown a direct challenge to the ECI and the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah combine by

declaring a joint programme of nationwide protests against the usurpation of the electoral process, it has come as a happy augury for the Congress, which, until the other day, was at the receiving end of its alliance partners. Instead of making the Narendra Modi-led dispensation its main target, the allies had preferred to target the Congress, and more so Rahul Gandhi.

From all available accounts and the optics of it, the September 30, 2026, INDIA bloc meeting has firmly established the Congress as its leader. Not only was the most mercurial and unpredictable ally-leader and Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee, seen going overboard to exhibit her bonhomie towards the Congress leadership led by Sonia Gandhi and, surprisingly, even Rahul Gandhi, but more or less all the 20-odd alliance partners attending the meeting ceded total space to the GOP in deference to its status as the only national party with a pan-India presence among the alliance ranks. This feeling was altogether missing during the last three years of its existence.

The media reports undoubtedly suggest that the alliance's high-profile meeting successfully unified the opposition around a roadmap, surprisingly crafted by the Indian National Congress. This, in turn, has placed the party on a firm political footing. Unimaginable until the political events shaped by



the goings-on in the corridors of Nirvachan Sadan, the INDIA combine adopted the core resolutions that had earlier been passed by the Congress Working Committee (CWC).

The narrative and agenda of the combined meeting heavily mirrored the strategy crafted by the Congress just a day earlier during its CWC meeting. This position solidified the Congress's leading role within the alliance through several key developments.

However, the second development, emerging from the same AICC corridors where the CWC meeting was held to set the course for the INDIA bloc deliberations, should worry the Congress's top leadership. It concerns poll-bound Punjab, where the Congress, with good chances of returning to power after a decade, has been on a suicidal mission. The high command's decision to replace Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Amarinder

Singh Warring, after initial reluctance and dilly-dallying, is more baffling than creditworthy. It came after wasting precious time trying to control factionalism and humiliating senior leaders tasked with bringing the warring factions together. The then AICC in-charge of Punjab and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel lost both face and his job. This was through no fault of his, as he ostensibly followed the high command's directions (read Rahul Gandhi) to protect Warring at all costs, despite growing resentment against him within the PCC. Even more importantly, further embarrassment was in store when the high command chose to sweep under the carpet the findings of the committee headed by AICC treasurer Ajay Maken, who had been entrusted with the task of gauging the mood of a cross-section of the state leadership. The committee, it is believed, found an overwhelming mood in favour of a change in the PCC leadership. The Punjab episode should be an eye-opener for the GOP's top leadership and force it into the introspection that is

so sorely needed to set its house in order at a time when the entire opposition has reposed confidence in Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Effecting a change on the basis of the Maken committee's findings would not only have protected the high command from embarrassment but also saved the party from negative publicity for unnecessarily dragging out the issue before subsequently changing the state leadership.

A situation similar to Punjab's prevails in several other states and Union Territories, particularly Jammu and Kashmir. Quick decisions are needed to strengthen the organisation. The top leadership must evaluate its conduct in Punjab and take corrective steps elsewhere, including within the AICC's organisational structure.

A strong, battle-hardened organisation will help the Congress establish its leadership role in the INDIA combine. The shift in the allies' mood on September 30, 2026, should be capitalised on to strengthen Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Building on the alliance's agitation roadmap and the CWC resolution, the Congress must strengthen itself internally, no matter what the cost.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge took centre stage to officially announce the bloc's six-point joint protest strategy. However, it seemed that the veteran of many political battles, Kharge, had read the mood of the

INDIA conglomerate leaders gathered at Delhi's Constitutional Club. Perhaps he thought it was the right moment to press Rahul Gandhi to address the press conference, with the purpose of keeping him centre-stage.

In declaring the six-point protest strategy, Kharge left no one in doubt that Rahul Gandhi would be leading from the front. The two-pronged fight for him and Rahul Gandhi now is to steer the INDIA bloc effectively and, at the same time, prevent Punjab-like situations from arising through quick and stern decision-making.

The bloc's six-point joint protest strategy:

1. October 2-8: District-level "Save Democracy" marches across the country.
2. October 6: A coordinated march by all Opposition MPs to the Election Commission headquarters.
3. Mid-October: Seeking official intervention from the President of India.
4. November 1: A mega joint rally in New Delhi.

The challenge for the Congress, as the leader of the opposition grouping, is enormous. But the opportunity is golden: to shed inertia and set itself on course for internal and external reforms.

The writer is a media expert and policy analyst; Views presented are personal.