

**ADDRESS AT THE RELEASE OF JOINT PHILATELIC STAMP AND
“CELEBRATING KHADI: THE FABRIC OF FREEDOM” EVENT**

{October 1, 2019; 1800 hrs}

His Excellency Mr. Hamad Mohamed Al-Fahida, COO of Qatar Post;
Dr. Cherif Amor, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, VCUarts Qatar;
Mr. Christopher Fink, Chair of the Fashion Design Department, VCUarts Qatar;
Mr. Prasad Bidapa, Entrepreneur, Stylist and Fashion Guru from Bangalore;
Excellencies and members of the diplomatic corps;
Senior officials from Qatar Post;
Partners from Qatar Foundation and the media fraternity;
Distinguished friends,

Namaskar, Assalamu Alaikum and Good evening.

I am delighted to welcome you all here today, as we celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, who India considers the 'Father of the Nation'. We have already organized a few events on Gandhiji earlier this year, as part of our celebrations. Several restaurants in Doha will be organizing **vegetarian food festivals** during the course of this month, in honour of Gandhian values and principles. On his birth anniversary, which falls on tomorrow, I feel that today's release of a stamp, and organizing an event featuring *Khadi* - his favourite fabric - will be a fitting tribute to his memory. Further, celebrating this event under the framework of the India-Qatar Year of Culture, is a matter of additional pride and satisfaction.

I am extremely thankful to the Government of Qatar for their full support to this initiative. In particular, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Faleh Mohamed Al-Nuaimi, Chairman and Managing Director of Qatar Post, and his entire team, for their unwavering support and cooperation. Without their commitment, this release of the stamp today, would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my friend Mr. Prasad Bidapa, Mr. Christopher Fink, Ms. Sonali Raman of VCUarts, and the rest of their team, Ms. Sakala Debrass, as well as the **Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF)**, for their energetic contribution to putting together today's event.

Let me begin by elaborating a bit on the significance of the fabric *Khadi* - which is a handspun, hand-woven natural fabric, and the *Charkha* - a manual spinning wheel used for spinning thread or yarn from fibers. These came to symbolize the freedom struggle of India in an extraordinary manner, and were popularized among the masses by Mahatma Gandhi. For Indians, Khadi is not just a fabric, it is a spirit which was kindled in the hearts of thousands of freedom-fighters by Mahatma Gandhi, to challenge the might of the British empire in a peaceful and non-violent manner. It was a subtle, but highly symbolic means, to involve the vast Indian masses into the mainstream of the freedom struggle, while making them self-reliant and giving them dignity. It became a rallying cry for

the freedom struggle, where *khadi* and *charkha* became a means to express solidarity with the national cause, and everyone, cutting across class, caste, regional and lingual lines, participated in it with a sense of national duty and pride. Writing in his journal *Young India* in 1921, Mahatma Gandhi noted, and I quote:

"Charkha is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and therefore freedom... I may deserve the curse of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it, for every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love. And with all that, in as much as the loss of it brought about India's slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom." Unquote.

Gandhiji firmly believed that the progress of India depends on the development of its villages and that every village should be a self-contained republic. In fact, the Gandhian philosophy of 'village economy' was premised on the growth of rural industries like khadi, handlooms, sericulture, handicrafts, etc.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with these thoughts that we decided to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi by celebrating this yarn. What Gandhiji realized and understood in the 20th century, we have re-invented in the 21st century. In this era of climate change and rising temperatures, Khadi holds a lot of promise due to its eco-friendly characteristics. It has a near-zero carbon footprint, because it is hand-spun and hand-woven. Manufacturing one meter of Khadi requires just 3 liters of water, as against 56 liters of water for machine-made fabric. The manufacturing of Khadi is an eco-friendly activity, since it does not generate any toxic waste products. Its weave creates air pockets, which make it cool in summers and warm in winters. It has a handcrafted self-texture, making each khadi cloth unique, beautiful and durable. It is due to these factors that this fabric holds a lot of potential in hot and humid countries, such as the Gulf countries, including Qatar.

There are a few outlets in Qatar, selling 'authentic' Khadi garments. As ecological awareness increases in the years to come, I am confident that Khadi products will become increasingly more popular. I will conclude on this positive note, and I once again thank all of you for joining us on this auspicious occasion. I wish you a pleasant evening.

Thank you!
