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# COTTON STATISTICS & NEWS

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## Agrarian Crisis – Why farmers commit suicide? Part-3

*(Dr. K.R. Kranthi, Director of Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur has completed his Ph.D in Entomology from IARI, New Delhi. He has more than 20 years of experience in the field of cotton research.)*

Over the past 10 years, 'Bt-cotton' technology emerged as a major driver of change. Bollworms were effectively controlled, cotton yields were protected and insecticide usage against bollworms decreased. Though there was a very impressive decline in the insecticide usage initially during the first 5 years of Bt cotton until 2007, subsequently over the past 6-7 years, the usage of fertilizers and chemical pesticides increased continuously. Minor insects which were not controlled by Bt cotton became major pests and necessitated extensive insecticide usage. Hybrids are designed to respond to fertilizers. Higher yields are generally obtained with irrigation and optimum levels of fertilizer application. Hybrids are known for hybrid vigour in producing large amount of biomass, which eventually results in nutrient mining from the soil.

If the soil is not properly replenished with balanced macronutrients, secondary and micronutrients, the subsequent crop is likely to suffer higher levels of insect and disease infestation. It is widely acknowledged that higher levels of nitrogenous

fertilizers make the crop more vulnerable to insect pests, thus, warranting the need for repeated insecticide applications. Research results have shown that micronutrient deficiencies also render cotton crop more vulnerable to sap-sucking insects and diseases. The increase in usage of pesticides, fertilizers, high-priced GM seed and costly labour, has resulted in high cost of cultivation.

The following factors have contributed to the high cost of cultivation:

- 1. GM Hybrid seed:** Hybrid seeds are produced manually through a labour intensive process and thus are expensive to produce. The seeds are produced every year and farmers are required to buy fresh hybrid seeds every year. GM technology is royalty driven. The GM hybrid seed is at least 6-7 fold costlier than the conventional non-GM varieties. The DES data shows that in 2011, farmers spent Rs. 3595 per hectare on seeds, which is more than triple the cost of Rs. 1086 per hectare spent in 2003. This may have been due to the expensive Bt-cotton GM hybrid seeds. High seed cost plays a major role in causing distress especially in rain-fed regions which warrant re-sowing when germination is poor because of erratic onset of monsoon. This problem is more acute in the predominantly

**EXPERT'S  
Column**



**Dr K.R. Kranthi**

rain-fed states of Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka which spent more than Rs. 3700 per hectare in 2011. Maharashtra has 95% of its cotton area under rain-fed conditions, while Karnataka and Telangana have more than 86% of the cotton area dependent on rains alone for water requirement of the crop. Thus seed cost plays truant in rain-fed regions to create initial distress.

## 2. Nutrient mining by hybrid cotton, micronutrient deficiencies and increased biotic stress:

Continuous cultivation of hybrid cotton in the same field causes immense nutrient mining. If not replenished appropriately, nutrient deficiencies increase cumulatively and so does the need for increased application of fertilizers. Over the past few years, biotic stress factors such as leaf reddening and sap-sucking pest infestation increased significantly due to the deficiencies of a few micronutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus. Non-replenishment of Nitrogen + phosphorous + potash (NPK) in a balanced manner coupled with deficiencies of secondary and micronutrients such as magnesium, zinc and boron renders the crop susceptible to insect pests and diseases. Imbalanced fertilizer usage is partly because of the Government subsidized 'Statutory Price Control (SPC)' policy of only urea for Nitrogen (N) and not any other nutrients such as P, K or micronutrients. Over the past 5 years, the price of 'muriate of potash (K)' quadrupled; the price of phosphatic (P) fertilizers tripled, but urea cost increased only marginally. As a result farmers have been using urea in excessive quantities but

very less of P and K, thus leading to imbalanced fertilizer usage and increase in insect pests, especially sap-sucking pests and diseases.

## 3. Bt hybrids are susceptible to sap-sucking insect pests:

Bt-hybrids control only caterpillars and bollworms. 'Bt-technology' does not control sap-sucking insect pests such as thrips, jassids and whiteflies which cause extensive damage. Majority of commercial hybrids are highly susceptible to sap-sucking insect pests.

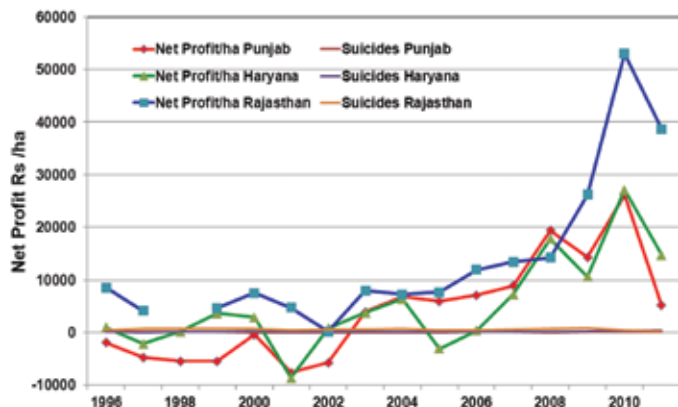
## 4. Insecticide resistant sucking insect pests:

Sap-sucking pests have developed resistance to almost all the recommended insecticides, thereby prompting repeated insecticide applications.

## 5. Labour shortages and high wages:

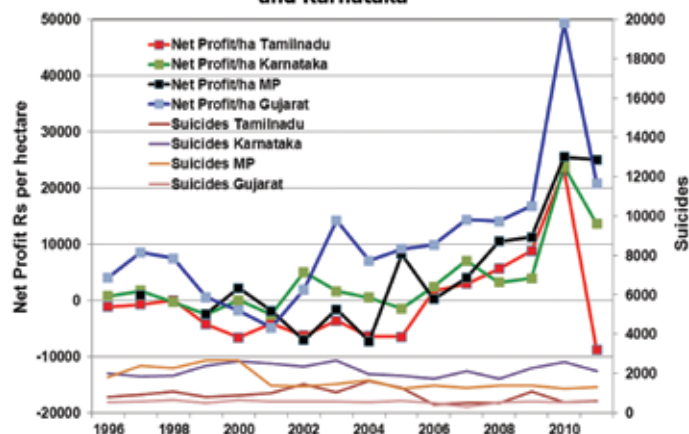
Though extremely valuable in providing employment in rural areas, there are reports that the MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee) scheme is actually causing labour shortages for crucial agriculture operations thus leading to increased demand for wages and high cost of labour. The DES data (table 4) shows that as compared to the base year of 2003, labour wages in 2011-12 had increased exorbitantly by at least 7 fold in Karnataka, erstwhile AP, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The labour wages in AP increased to Rs 19,351 from Rs 6,343 per hectare. Similarly the wages in Maharashtra increased from Rs 4,702 to Rs 20,127 and the wages in Gujarat increased from Rs 7510 in 2003 to Rs 20,013 per hectare in 2011.

Graph 6. Suicide Cases & Net Profitability in North India

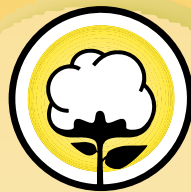


Suicide data sourced from NCRB, GOI. Net Profit calculated from <http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/>

Graph 7. Suicide Cases & Net Profitability in Gujarat, MP, TN and Karnataka



Suicide data sourced from NCRB, GOI. Net Profit calculated from <http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/>



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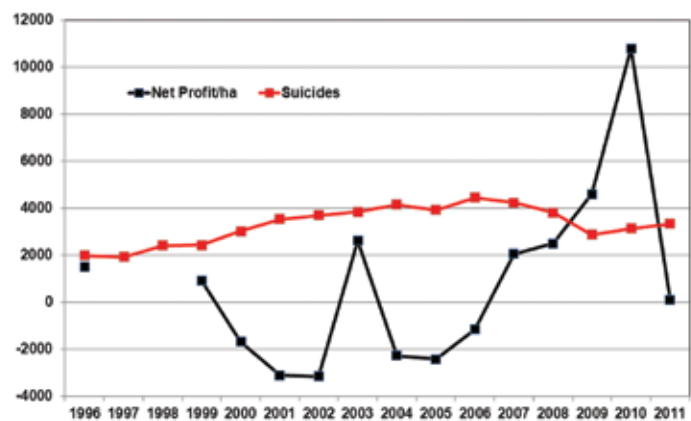
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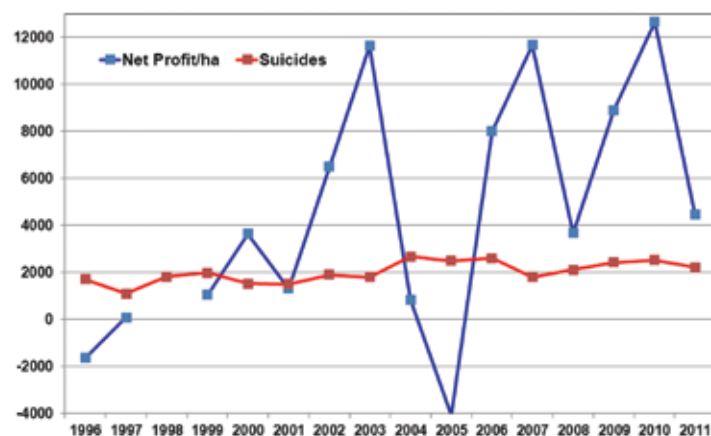
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Graph 8. Suicide Cases &amp; Net Profitability in Maharashtra



Suicide data sourced from NCRB, GOI. Net Profit calculated from <http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/>

Graph 9. Suicide Cases &amp; Net Profitability in AP



Suicide data sourced from NCRB, GOI. Net Profit calculated from <http://eands.dacnet.nic.in/>

### What is causing the stress?

Is cotton responsible for the stress? Logical reasoning suggests that this may not be the case. Firstly, if cotton was the cause of crisis, farmers would have shifted to other crops especially in Maharashtra and Telangana wherein agrarian crisis is intense. Instead, the area under cotton increased by 1.0 million hectares in each of the two states over the past 10 years right in the face of agrarian crisis. Further, if cotton was the cause, then, the agrarian stress would have been equally perceptible in the other major cotton growing states such as Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. But this has not been the case at any point of time in the past. For example, suicides are also high in states such as Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka where the area under cotton cultivation is less than 4.0% is not a major crop and conversely suicides are negligible in Gujarat and Haryana where cotton area is 25% and 16.8% of the area under agriculture in the two states respectively. Therefore relating cotton cultivation with suicides could be spurious. Moreover, as stated in the CACP Annual Report 2014, "The net rate of gross return, i.e., profitability over C2 (cost of production) is also maximum for cotton at 32 percent among kharif crops considered in the analysis (page 36, Price policy for Kharif crops 2014, Commission for agricultural costs and prices CACP, Government of India). Therefore it would be grossly erroneous to conclude that cotton cultivation could be the cause of agrarian crisis.

It would only be correct to state that like many crops, cotton is also facing a crisis of high input costs and stagnant yields, but in rain-fed regions

where hybrid cultivation is not very profitable. The entire analysis points out to the fact that high cost of cultivation and low net returns cause great stress (graphs 6 to 9). Unfortunately, consistently pathetic and low net returns coupled with high cost of cultivation in Maharashtra and high investment beset with constant risks in Andhra Pradesh pose great concerns to cotton farming. Cotton cultivation in the other cotton growing states was found to be reasonably risk-free. Analysis (graph 6) shows that in Punjab and Haryana, the annual net profits on investment of Rs. 100 were Rs. 26 to 27 for the 6 year period after 2005. The net profits during this period were highest at Rs. 71.33 in Rajasthan. However during the 10 year period prior to 2005, the annual average net returns on Rs. 100 invested on cotton cultivation were negative at Rs. -10.44 per year in Punjab and Rs. -0.02 per year in Haryana but positive in Rajasthan at Rs. 39 per year. Cotton was found to be profitable in Gujarat with Rs. 15.39 per year for every Rs. 100 invested during the 7 year period prior to 2002 and Rs. 44.77 per year for the 9 year period after 2003. Cotton in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka provided net annual average profits of more than Rs. 20 per Rs. 100 invested over the 9 year period subsequent to 2003. Though the net returns were low in Tamilnadu, farmers are relatively less affected because of the assured irrigation in at least 40% of the 1.0 lakh hectares in the state.

It is a pity that farmers of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have to invest more than Rs. 61,000 per hectare every year after 2011, to cultivate cotton under predominantly rain-fed conditions



subjecting themselves to high risks. Beyond doubt, the entire analysis points towards high level of stress in Maharashtra and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, the returns are low at Rs. 14.9 per year per Rs. 100 investment, but are better than Maharashtra. Nevertheless, the most important factor that causes immense stress in Telangana and AP is the high level of fluctuation in net profits per year. Please see graph 9 to get an idea of the year to year fluctuations that indicate enormous risks with cotton cultivation in the two states.

The net annual average returns in Maharashtra for an investment of Rs. 100 were negative at Rs. -5.26 for a period of 7 years prior to 2002 and a meagre Rs. 3.82 per year for Rs 100 invested during 9 years after 2003. Indeed such low net returns can certainly cause agony to the 40 lakh farming families whose sole livelihood depends on cotton cultivation under rain-fed conditions. In light of the negligible annual profits, the high investment of more than 61,000 per year will have to be essentially drawn from money lenders or banks. Needless to mention, the extremely poor returns and high seasonal risks have been the hallmark of low productive cotton cultivation systems in Maharashtra for the past two decades. Clearly these conditions are only likely to get worse in the near immediate future with the ever increasing cost of inputs and labour.

### Are there any solutions?

Suicides reflect agrarian crisis and agrarian stress is primarily related to declining profitability especially in small scale farms in rain-fed tracts. As has been pointed by many researchers, suicides in rural India could be part of a very complex phenomenon which in many cases is intricately woven into socio-economic aspects of agrarian societies. This article examines the economic crisis only from the perspective of cotton cultivation and does not take a look either at the relative socio-economic dynamics or economic stress that may have been caused either due to other crops or the aberrant weather or any other system changes in the agrarian sector. Based on the analysis, it should be possible to find appropriate long term sustainable solutions at least for cotton which is a major crop in Maharashtra and Telangana states where agrarian stress can be very acute because of the high risk involved with predominantly rain-fed farming in the two states.

A few of the possible tangible solutions are:

1. A provision for special state specific minimum support price (MSP) of cotton at 50% above

the production cost (C2) in Maharashtra and Telangana which have more than 90% of cotton area under rain-fed tracts. The special MSP can be operated in the two states by the Cotton Corporation of India.

2. Reduction in cost of production by lowering down input costs using varieties (variety seeds can be re-sown, whereas hybrid seeds cannot be re-sown) coupled with legume based cotton cropping systems that can effectively help in natural cotton pest management, strengthen soil nutrient management through nitrogen fixation thereby reducing chemical inputs, enhancing yields and overall profitability.
3. Approval of Bt-varieties in addition to the existing By-hybrids. The seeds of Bt varieties can be reused and cost of inputs could be reduced to at least half of the current costs incurred with Bt-hybrids.
4. Enhancing irrigation and infrastructure facilities in Maharashtra and Telangana
5. Part-time disabling of MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee) scheme during kharif season to ensure labour availability in the cotton growing states.

This study shows that of all the cotton growing states, net returns were the lowest in Maharashtra. Is it possible to increase the net profits from cotton cultivation in Maharashtra? For profits to increase, the cost of production must decrease substantially and the yields coupled with cotton market prices should increase significantly. Unfortunately, the cost of seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, labour wages and transport are increasing every year, while the cotton yields and market price are either stagnating or decreasing over the recent immediate past. Thankfully, there is immense scope for Government policies especially to support critical inputs, labour availability, mechanisation, export-imports and pricing to ensure that cotton farming becomes more profitable in rain-fed farms. Farmers need inexpensive seeds, good quality bio-pesticides, bio-fertilizers and machinery to reduce dependence on labour. Timely availability of inputs and labour can help immensely in reducing the stress and enhancing yields. But on topmost priority, there is a need to support research that can lower down the cost of cotton production and enhance ecological and economic sustainability of cotton production systems.

More importantly, cotton price needs to be protected. Government support can be helpful in this endeavour. The National Commission on Farmers chaired by Prof. Swaminathan recommended setting up of minimum support price at 50% above the production cost. It is reported that over the past 7-8 years in China, farmers were being paid about 50% higher price than 'Cotlook-A' through Government schemes. However, there is a need to conduct an in-depth analysis to understand the implications of enhanced MSP on the overall cotton economics that can enable the development of appropriate strategies to benefit farmers, traders, value chain industry and the consumer.

Cotton cultivation is highly labour intensive with a need for 110 to 120 man-days per hectare. In a decentralised farming set up such as the one in India where millions of farmers manage their own small farms, small scale machinery would be useful to circumvent labour shortages. But such machinery can also displace labour to create a new crisis in the rural sector.

Another important issue relates to varietal seeds. It would be immensely helpful if the Government can intervene to ensure that the option of 'GM variety seeds' should also be available to farmers in India, as is the case with all other cotton growing countries across the globe. GM variety seeds can cost less than one-third of the GM hybrid seeds. This can make a huge difference in rain-fed regions, because early sowing of early maturing compact Bt-cotton varieties in high density planting can reduce the cost of cultivation in rain-fed regions by half and enhance the yields significantly.

Increase in the domestic consumption of raw cotton by the textile industry coupled with exports can immensely help stabilising local prices. Governments can play a significant role by enhancing infrastructure facilities related to cotton cultivation and trade especially in Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Water management can play a significant role in rain-fed regions. Construction of check-dams, farm ponds and micro-irrigation can help enhancing cotton yields. Additionally, simple technologies such as rain water harvesting, soil moisture conservation through bio-mulching, reduced tillage and crop residue recycling especially in rain-fed farms have good potential to increase yields.

To ensure sustainable farming, it is extremely important to enhance the soil organic reserves through cropping system techniques. Crop residue incorporation, vermin-composting, bio-fertilizers, reduced tillage, organic manures etc., assist in increasing soil organic content and thereby enhance the crop response to fertilizers. In addition to these there is a need to explore sustainable crop production options. It may sound over-simplistic, but legume crops in cropping systems with cotton may actually provide long-term sustainable solutions. Legume crops such as beans, peas, gram, soybean, lucerne, berseem etc., fix large quantities of atmospheric nitrogen when the seeds are treated with nitrogen fixing bacterium species called 'Rhizobium'. When cultivated as intercrop or in crop rotation, soybean and other legume crops act as hosts for naturally occurring insect predators and parasitoids thus reducing the need for chemical pesticides. Integrated nutrient management actually helps the crop to fight back insect pests and diseases thereby reducing the need for pesticides. These cropping systems provide good economic returns apart from greatly reducing the need for chemical fertilizers. Thus legume based cotton cropping systems can effectively help in cotton pest management, soil nutrient management and enhance profitability.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, cotton is a profitable crop in general and is therefore preferred by farmers over many other kharif crops. The net returns could be less in rain-fed farms, though. Like any crop in rain-fed agriculture, cotton could cause distress in rain-fed farms where the cost of cultivation is high, yields are risk prone and net profits are very low especially when monsoon behaves erratically over the season. Clearly, agrarian stress is related to the declining net returns in agriculture and cannot be related to cotton cultivation alone. But, there are long term sustainable solutions that can lower down the cost of production and increase yields. Thus, there is no room for despair. Indian farmers are resilient and can usher in a second farm revolution in India, if supported with proper technologies and policies. It needs a collective efforts from all stakeholders to ensure that the farmer confidence in rain-fed cotton farms is restored as we progress towards eco-friendly, sustainable and profitable farming systems.

*(The views expressed in this column are of the author and not that of Cotton Association of India)*

# THE COTTON KING OF THE WORLD

*Unlike so many illustrious Marwari industrialists whose roles in India's economic growth continue to be remembered, Govindram Seksaria's name at best conjures faded memories from a bygone era and largely remains unsung. In remembrance of his many contributions, MARWAR pays tribute to this giant among men.*

*Text : Joseph Rozario*



ASK THE AVERAGE INDIAN, EVEN those from entrepreneurial circles, about the most consequential Marwaris to dominate the business horizon in pre-independence India and it is unlikely that there will be any mention of Govindram Seksaria who, despite having earned the sobriquet 'The Cotton King of the World', has been all but erased from our collective memory.

Yet this was a man whose influence spanned three continents—a man who was considered one of the brightest stars that ever illuminated the Indian business horizon, whose innate business sense was legendary and whose lifelong commitment to charity and philanthropy is deserving of many adulatory epithets. Here, in fact, was a man who, in his modesty, so much shunned affectation, ostentation and publicity that very few records of his life and contributions exist. All we have today to immortalise his name are mere hearsay from members and

associates of the Seksaria clan, especially his grandson, Rajkumar Seksaria (who was barely a year old when Govindram Seksaria breathed his last in 1946), newspaper clippings that date back to the pre-independence era and the edifices of learning he founded, many of which stand tall even today.

## An unassuming tycoon

Anecdotes sometimes paint a better picture of a man than mere words, and here is one that will succinctly portray the defining facets of the great Govindram Seksaria:

The story goes that once the president of the New York Stock Exchange, who was also the head of New York's leading cotton firm, was on a global tour and happened to be in Bombay (now Mumbai). While about his business, he thought of dropping by to visit Seth Govindram Seksaria, who was a highly respected member of the New York Stock Exchange. Upon his arrival, he found Seth Govindram squatting on a gaddi, clad in his usual dhoti and kurta, surrounded by a group of people, each discussing a different matter, but all striving for his attention. The whole gathering looked so informal, so devoid of the trappings that are normally associated with business csars that the president had to reassure himself that he indeed was in the office of the 'Cotton King of the World'. Needless to say, he was.

The unusual experience helped the president take back a lesson or two in humility, especially the realisation that it is possible for wealth and humility to walk hand-in-hand.

## The beginning

Govindram Seksaria was born on October 19, 1888, in Nawalgarh, Rajasthan. As was the custom of the day, he was married off early. In 1903, when he was barely 15 years old, he left his home for Bombay, accompanied by his father Gordhandasji Seksaria. However, before he could fully get his bearings in the new city or familiarise himself with the shades and nuances of enterprise, in an ugly twist of fate, he lost both his parents in quick succession. The void created by his father's demise compelled young Govindram Seksaria to take over the reins of the modest family business, not to forget the onerous responsibility of looking after his young wife and six siblings, comprising brothers Bholaramji, Ramnathji and Makhanlalji and three sisters.



Though tossed into the stormy seas of life at an early age, he refused to be daunted – this was in spite of the fact that he did not have the advantage of a sound education—and gave the family business a firmer footing, naming it Messrs Govindram Seksaria. As fate would have it, the Russo-Japanese War broke out soon after (in 1905) which brought with it the unusual opportunity for Seksaria to intently watch, study and gain insight on how political unrest can not only send stock markets into disarray but also throw up new opportunities. It unwittingly prepared him for the First World War that was to come in 1914 and the immense success he was to reap from it by trading in cotton. Messrs Govindram Seksaria was subsequently granted membership of the Cotton Contract Board, with which his name became one of consequence in the cotton market. Later, he became an original member of the East India Cotton Association (a body of buyers, sellers, brokers, exporters and importers of cotton) – a post-war development.

### A global speculator

After his successes during the Great War, there was no turning back. Despite ups and downs in the market (notably Britain's break with the Gold Standard in 1931 in the aftermath of the Great Depression of 1929, which was primarily brought about by the collapse of the stock market) and its effects on world businesses, Seksaria steered through with calm, poise and dignity as was characteristic of him. Not only did he remain relatively unscathed by the vagaries of the market, he even reaped untold successes from his investments, thanks to his cumulative experience of over three decades and his ability to either be prepared for untoward circumstances or steer through them with fortitude.



Left: Govindram Seksaria's son Kudilal Seksaria

Above: Govindram Seksaria's grandsons Rajkumar Seksaria (top) and Nandkumar Seksaria



Not to be confined to the cotton market, the restless Seksaria, now fired by his successes, made forays into the bullion and various commodity markets. His firm soon became a respected member of the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Bombay Bullion Exchange, the Bombay Seed Brokers Association and the Indian Merchants' Chamber. He also became one of the founders of the Indian Stock Exchange.

Emboldened by these achievements, Seksaria felt that the national bourses were too small a playing field for him, whereupon he became a member of the New York Cotton Exchange – a rare privilege for an Indian in those days – and active in the Liverpool Cotton Exchange. With further involvement in the copper, sugar and wheat exchanges of Britain and America, his sphere of influence began to be felt across three continents and his views and judgment came to be respected and trusted in both national and international business circles, so much so that prominent business houses closely followed his moves, with some business magnates even sending cabled requests to him for his views on possible market developments.

### Speculator-turned-industrialist

Having made his millions in the stock markets, he turned his attention to a more concrete and enduring pursuit, namely, industry. Thereupon, he founded a new firm, by the name of Govindram Brothers Ltd, that was to handle the company's industrial interests. This was at a time when India's national movement was beginning to gather steam. Sensing the need to set up exclusively Indian enterprises, he synergised national growth and development by manufacturing vegetable oils and then diversifying into sugar, textiles, minerals, banking, motion pictures and printing. In this pursuit, the Seksaria Oil Mill (in Hyderabad) stood out in particular for its novel initiative of extracting oil from tonnes of cotton seeds, and making good use of what was earlier treated as waste. His textile factories dotted Bombay, Indore and Rajasthan; his sugar factories hummed with activity in UP; his oil factories and rice mills were scattered across half the nation; and his banking interests – he was the founder chairman of Rajasthan Bank – were mainly concentrated in Bombay and Central India. His thoughtful interest in mining motivated him to unlock the huge underground treasures of the Sawantwadi region of Konkan – a long-neglected area with rich mica deposits – much to the benefit of both local residents and his growing business empire. Apart from these, he also had substantial holdings in countless other industrial enterprises across the country.

As a businessman, Govindram Seksaria had an exceptional eye for opportunity. He also had an insatiable hunger for knowledge and was almost





Govindram Seksaria (sitting, third from left) with members of the Congress Working Committee. He hosted the Pune Session of the AICC in 1940

always better informed than others. His strategic manoeuvres exemplified his courage which especially showed when it came to facing commercial challenges. He was open-minded, could judge men well and chose his colleagues, co-operators and workers well and unerringly, laying great store by honesty and industry. His everyday dealings were characterised by promptness of action which he exhorted others to follow. One of his guiding principles was 'Never do yourself what you can get a right man to do', which ensured making correct use of others' talents and expertise. This enabled him to manage and run his many enterprises successfully and still find time to consider new propositions. He was also inordinately motivated by charity, philanthropy and a sense of duty towards the nation, and this brought out the best in him.

### Modesty, charity and philanthropy

If one were to use a single word to describe Govindram Seksaria's persona, it would be 'modesty'. Because of his unassuming nature, Seth Govindram shied away from media attention and public appearances, except perhaps the odd educational function, given his unusual ardour to promote education—something that fate and circumstances had denied him. Otherwise, he sought no titles, no place in public committees, no newspaper headlines or political luminescence. He would play host to public figures, and finance public causes with zeal, but rarely make public statements or public appearances.



Indore Malwa United Mills (once owned by Govindram Seksaria, now taken over by National Textile Corporation)

Seth Govindram's limited education certainly was a disadvantage, but far from letting the handicap relegate him to obscurity, he rose above it to soar to the greatest heights of entrepreneurial prominence. Driven by the realisation that education was the need of the hour and the very basis of national progress, he greatly channelised his munificence towards the founding of educational institutions of every description, the very first being a girls' school in his native Nawalgarh. That apart, his donations towards academic causes, notable among which were Vidya Bhawan of Udaipur and Seksaria Education Society of Bhilwara (both in Rajasthan), helped countless others. His largesse also ensured the institutionalisation of over a dozen places of learning, including those set up in answer to Gandhiji's call for illuminating the minds of young Indians.

The story goes that Gandhiji, realising the importance of education in fuelling India's nationalistic movement, instructed Jammalal Bajaj to collect one lakh rupees as an initial corpus towards the setting up of an educational fund. At this point, one of Jammalal Bajaj's close aides, Srinivasji Bagarka—who also knew Govindram Seksaria—introduced the two. On hearing about Gandhiji's heartening



Govindram Seksaria College of Commerce & Economics, Nagpur



*Palatial Seksaria haveli in Nawalgarh*

initiative, Govindram Seksaria, who himself was also an ardent votary of education, pledged the entire amount and at once had it delivered to Gandhiji. Further, allaying Gandhiji's misgivings on his inability to maintain accounts, Seth Govindramji lauded him for his endeavour to spread education and entreated him to spend it as and when required. Later, to sustain and augment the initiative, he sent Rs.4,00,000 more, with which Gandhiji was able to establish colleges in Nagpur, Wardha, Jabalpur and Khamgaon in Seth Govindram Seksaria's name. Some of these colleges are better known today as Govindram Seksaria College of Arts & Commerce, Wardha; Govindram Seksaria College of Commerce & Economics, Nagpur; and Govindram Seksaria College of Science, Belgaum.

Apart from education, Seth Govindramji generously contributed towards humanitarian and public causes as well, a prominent example being the Bombay Hospital, of which he was the chief donor at the time of its inception. Counted among the best hospitals in the country today, it has an entire floor (in the old building) that houses the Basantidevi Govindram Seksaria Maternity Ward. Among Govindram Seksaria's other beneficiaries were the Rajasthan Sevak Sangh, the Marwari Medical Relief Society and the Hindu Deendaya Sangh at Matunga (Mumbai). He also set up a permanent free kitchen and dharmashala at Lakshman Jhula near Haridwar. These, however, were not the only institutions upon which he bestowed largesse. Monies were also donated to countless others (including schools, colleges, orphanages, ashrams, temples, dispensaries, asylums, academic bodies, etc) on the occasion of the appointment of Seth Govindramji's son Kudilalji as his successor. To crown it all, on his death-bed, he gifted Rs.50,00,000—a fabulous sum in those days—to charity!

Just as in business, Seth Govindram was modest even in charity, choosing neither to gain publicity from his benevolence nor make an ostentatious display of it. On the domestic front, he was ever caring and considerate. He looked upon his extended



*Busts of Govindram Seksaria and Smt Basantidevi Govindram Seksaria at Bombay Hospital*

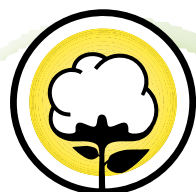
family—comprising his brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces—as a single family unit, and spent considerable time with not just them but often also with distant relatives and friends.

### **The end of an era**

His affection for his family in fact was so intense that the unfortunate demise of his brother Ramnathji and nephew Keshardeoji within a short span of two years left Govindramji so devastated that his health deteriorated and he never recovered from it. And so on May 22, 1946, just before India gained independence, the legend of Seth Govindramji was cut short by his untimely death. The tragedy left his family and friends shattered and the nation shorn of one of her stoutest pillars of enterprise and philanthropy. Needless to say, his contributions to national growth and development will forever remain enshrined in the annals of India's history.

Seth Govindramji's life was a paradox, his modesty and humility belying his untold riches and extensive business empire. Simple, frugal and generous, the giant in him never showed. Much like Gandhiji, he was rarely, if ever, seen in anything other than his trademark dhoti and kurta, with never a silk shirt to boast about. In today's fast-paced world, Govindram Seksaria would perhaps be an incongruity, but the qualities he epitomised are wonderfully inspirational—they exemplify humaneness, separating those with a soul from money-making humanoids—something from which not just future generations of Marwaris but all else could draw many valuable lessons.

*Courtesy: Marwar / Spenta Multimedia*



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1	P/H/R	ICS-101	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0-7.0	15	9729 (34600)	9870 (35100)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)
2	P/H/R	ICS-201	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0-7.0	15	9870 (35100)	10011 (35600)	10095 (35900)	10095 (35900)	10095 (35900)	10095 (35900)
3	GUJ	ICS-102	Fine	22mm	4.0-6.0	20	6749 (24000)	6889 (24500)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)
4	KAR	ICS-103	Fine	23mm	4.0-5.5	21	7902 (28100)	8042 (28600)	8127 (28900)	8127 (28900)	8127 (28900)	8127 (28900)
5	M/M	ICS-104	Fine	24mm	4.0-5.0	23	8323 (29600)	8464 (30100)	8548 (30400)	8548 (30400)	8548 (30400)	8548 (30400)
6	P/H/R	ICS-202	Fine	26mm	3.5-4.9	26	10011 (35600)	10095 (35900)	10179 (36200)	10151 (36100)	10123 (36000)	10123 (36000)
7	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.0-3.4	25	8520 (30300)	8661 (30800)	8745 (31100)	8717 (31000)	8717 (31000)	8717 (31000)
8	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.5-4.9	25	8914 (31700)	9026 (32100)	9111 (32400)	9083 (32300)	9083 (32300)	9083 (32300)
9	P/H/R	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5-4.9	26	10095 (35900)	10179 (36200)	10264 (36500)	10236 (36400)	10208 (36300)	10208 (36300)
10	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.0-3.4	26	8802 (31300)	8942 (31800)	9026 (32100)	8998 (32000)	8998 (32000)	8998 (32000)
11	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5-4.9	26	9167 (32600)	9280 (33000)	9364 (33300)	9336 (33200)	9336 (33200)	9336 (33200)
12	P/H/R	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	10264 (36500)	10348 (36800)	10432 (37100)	10404 (37000)	10376 (36900)	10376 (36900)
13	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	9589 (34100)	9701 (34500)	9786 (34800)	9758 (34700)	9758 (34700)	9758 (34700)
14	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	9617 (34200)	9729 (34600)	9814 (34900)	9786 (34800)	9786 (34800)	9786 (34800)
15	M/M/A/K	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.5-4.9	28	9842 (35000)	9954 (35400)	10039 (35700)	10011 (35600)	10011 (35600)	10011 (35600)
16	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.5-4.9	28	9786 (34800)	9898 (35200)	9983 (35500)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)
17	M/M/A/K	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.5-4.9	29	10067 (35800)	10179 (36200)	10264 (36500)	10236 (36400)	10236 (36400)	10236 (36400)
18	M/M/A/K/T/O	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.5-4.9	30	10264 (36500)	10376 (36900)	10461 (37200)	10432 (37100)	10432 (37100)	10432 (37100)
19	A/K/T/O	ICS-106	Fine	32mm	3.5-4.9	31	10461 (37200)	10573 (37600)	10657 (37900)	10629 (37800)	10629 (37800)	10629 (37800)
20	M(P)/K/T	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	3.0-3.8	33	13076 (46500)	13076 (46500)	13076 (46500)	13076 (46500)	13076 (46500)	13076 (46500)

(Note: Figures in bracket indicate prices in Rs./Candy)