

GARV SE SWADESHI

In today's rapidly globalizing world, where foreign brands dominate consumer shelves and international standards often define success, the call for "Garv Se Swadeshi" - pride in indigenous products - is both a powerful reminder and a pressing necessity. More than a slogan, it is a clarion call to reassert India's economic sovereignty, cultural identity, and collective strength through self-reliance.

Historically, the Swadeshi movement was the economic soul of India's freedom struggle. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi emphasized self-reliance not merely as an economic strategy but as a moral and national duty. Boycotting foreign goods and embracing khadi, handmade products, and local industries became acts of patriotism. Today, as we stand at the crossroads of economic challenges and opportunities, the ethos of Swadeshi must be revived with renewed vigor - not as nostalgia, but as a forward-looking movement.

Garv Se Swadeshi is about making conscious choices. It urges citizens to prefer Indian products - whether food, clothing, electronics, or services - not out of compulsion but out of conviction. Every rupee spent on local goods strengthens domestic industries, supports employment, and reduces dependence on imports. From artisans and farmers to small manufacturers and startups, the Swadeshi movement directly uplifts millions of livelihoods.

But adopting Swadeshi must not be limited to symbols or seasonal campaigns. It needs to become a lifestyle and mindset. While emotional connection with local products is important, the market also demands quality, innovation, and affordability. To make Swadeshi truly successful in the modern economy, there must be a dual focus - encouraging consumers to buy local and empowering producers to meet global standards.

This is where government, industry, and civil society must come together. Policy support, such as ease of doing business, financial incentives for MSMEs, tax benefits for local manufacturing, and quality certification frameworks, are critical. Equally important is the role of educational institutions and media in promoting awareness about the value of Swadeshi - not just economically, but in terms of environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and national pride.

Technology and digital platforms also offer a unique opportunity to promote Swadeshi products across urban and rural markets. The rise of e-commerce and local marketplaces like GeM (Government e-Marketplace) or ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) can give traditional artisans and small enterprises a direct link to consumers nationwide.

At its heart, Garv Se Swadeshi is about reclaiming India's self-worth. It is a response to decades of consumer behavior shaped by the idea that foreign is superior. That narrative must change. Indian products, culture, and knowledge systems have withstood centuries and evolved with time. We must now embrace them not only with emotion but also with confidence and pride.

Nature's Fury, Rotten Mutton & Food Grains: A Wake-Up Call for Jammu & Kashmir

■ GIRDHARI LAL RAINA

Disasters do not always arrive one at a time. At times they come in clusters- natural, social, and moral-forcing a society to confront uncomfortable truths about itself. Jammu & Kashmir has faced such a moment in recent weeks. Torrential rains and flash floods washed away lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. The horrific Pahalgam incident jolted the Nation's conscience. And just when people were trying to recover, the scandal of rotten mutton broke out, shaking trust in basic essentials of life.

At first sight these appear unconnected-one a natural calamity, another a human tragedy, and the third an economic scandal. Yet beneath the surface they reveal a disturbing common thread: reckless consumerism, short-sighted governance, and a society increasingly driven by greed rather than restraint- our traditional attribute.

Nature's Fury Is Man-Made

The devastating floods across Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand were described as "acts of God." But in truth, they were largely man-made tragedies. Unprecedented rainfall and cloudbursts would have been severe in any case, but it is reckless human interference that has magnified the scale and spread of damage.

Rampant deforestation has loosened soil cover, making landslides inevitable. Riverbanks and wetlands-nature's flood buffers-have been encroached upon in the name of "development." Agricultural land has been converted into concrete colonies, narrowing the space for water absorption and reducing food grains production. Springs are drying up, canals silting, and glaciers retreating. These are not natural phenomena alone; they are the consequences of decisions we took and the habits we cultivated.

The fury of nature is not random. It is a response to its systematic exploitation on large scale. What we are witnessing is less a "natural disaster" than a man-made disaster amplified by ecological imbalance.

Rotten Meat: A Symbol of a Broken System

Equally alarming was the rotten mutton scandal that erupted in Kashmir. On the sur-

face, it was a question of food hygiene: traders supplying substandard meat, consumers falling sick, and public anger spilling over. But the scandal is about much more.

It is about the collapse of regulatory mechanisms. It is about profiteers, locals included , exploiting scarcity and consumer demand. It is about a society so heavily dependent on imports that it becomes vulnerable to the whims of the unscrupulous. For hotel owners and restaurant businesses already reeling under the impact of the Pahalgam tragedy, this was a second blow.

Rotten meat is not merely a public health issue. It is the symbol of a broken/rusted supply chain, eroded ethics, and fragile consumer confidence. When scarcity meets greed, exploitation thrives.

The Western Model of Development and Its Limits

Both nature's fury and the rotten meat scandal point to a deeper malaise: the blind adoption of a Western model of development that is incompatible with the ecological and cultural realities of civilisational societies like ours.This model, built on the logic of infinite consumption and perpetual growth, assumes that well-being is measured by the quantity of goods consumed and possessed. It prioritizes accumulation over sustainability, profit over ethics, and dependency over self-reliance. Globally, it has produced climate change, widened inequalities, and accelerated cultural erosion. In fragile Himalayan ecosystems, the damage is more immediate, widespread and devastating.

Consumerism, a central pillar of this western model, equates happiness with possession. It insists that demand must always rise, because demand fuels production and growth. But our civilizational wisdom has long taught the opposite. From Lalla Ded to Nund Rishi, and from Mahatma Gandhi to Lal Bahadur Shastri, the message has been clear: restraint, balance, and controlled consumption.

Shastri's famous call during the food crisis of the 1960s, asking Indians to skip a meal once a week to reduce dependence on imports, was not merely symbolic. It was a demonstration of how restraint at the level of individuals

could strengthen the resilience of an entire nation.

Food Security: The Silent Emergency

The most under-discussed issue in J&K today is food security. While the rotten meat scandal made headlines, the larger picture remains largely ignored. The numbers are alarming:

By 2030, Jammu & Kashmir, a food deficit state, will require 1.82 million tonnes of food grains. Kashmir alone is projected to face a 50% food grain deficit.

Agricultural land is vanishing at an alarming pace. It is being converted into housing colonies, shopping complexes, and non-agricultural uses.

Farmers are shifting away from food grains to horticulture and cash crops, which are more profitable but less useful for meeting staple requirements.

Nearly 45% of mutton and poultry demand is already met through imports. The same is the story across sectors.

This growing dependency is not merely an economic issue. It is a strategic vulnerability. A society that cannot feed itself is a society that can be easily destabilized. In fact vested interests are using the issue in different ways. The rotten meat scandal, therefore, is not an isolated problem but a symptom of a deeper structural weakness. Opportunistic politicians try to save their skin by shifting blame usually to outsiders.

A Test of Leadership

Crises like floods, the Pahalgam carnage, and rotten meat scandals are not simply events to be managed-they are tests of leadership. Unfortunately, the dominant response so far has been to assign blame, pass the buck, and move on until the next crisis.

But true leadership-whether political, social, or religious-demands something more. It demands the courage to:

1. Introspect and look inwards instead of blaming Others.
2. Diagnose root causes rather than apply cosmetic fixes.
3. Protect agricultural land from reckless urbanization.
4. Incentivize food grain production to

Remembering Heros of 1965 Battle of Maharajke

1965 Indo Pak War projected a strong image of India to the world, when India defended its borders with a strong resolve, against an enemy, in possession of far superior class of modern weapons.The plan of Pakistan to stage an uprising in Kashmir and its offensive in Akhnoorfailed .Samba Sector was also a Launch Pad for the Indian Offensive.

"The Battle of Maharajke"

The Third Battalion of the Madras Regiment also known as 'Thagdas', as part of 69Mountain Brigade/ 6 Mountain Division was tasked to capture Maharajke Village, that was located 2.5 Kilometers from the International Border and 13 miles away from Pakistan Sialkot.

The battalion was nominated as the left forward battalion in Phase - I of the Brigade attack with 9 KUMAON and 4 MADRAS as the other two battalions attacking in the second Phase. The Thagdas Thambis relentlessly maintained the momentum of assault with exemplary courage and captured the Maharajke defencesby 0130 hrs on 08 Sep 1965. A counter attack of the enemy with tanks was successfully repulsed.

Subsequently, Village Joiah and Kokkar were cleared on 10 Sep and Village Kaloi on 11 Sep 1965.



From 13 Sep 1965, the Battalion led the Brigade Advance to Village Pagowal with its B Company and 4 MADRAS under command. During this advance, due to heavy

enemy artillery shelling, Maj Pijush Chowdhury sustained a splinter injury and later attained martyrdom. Village Pagowal was captured on 13 Sep and between 17 Sep to 23 Sep 1965,

Village Wadianwala, Gulewali and Khagga were also cleared. Cease fire was ordered on 24 Sep 1965.

During the war, the Thagdas accounted for 10 Mujahids as Prisoners of War, captured 16 Rifles, 04 Small Machine Guns and a huge cache of ammunition and vehicles. In the entire operation, seven Thagdas made the supreme sacrifice and 38 were wounded. For these gallant actions, the Battalion was conferred with Theatre Honour 'PUNJAB'.

Programme

► National Corruption Control & Human Welfare Organization is an NGO,which provides a platform to the Citizens, to express their gratitude to our Soldiers. A programme was chalked out with the support of Army to pay tributes to the Soldiers who were part of 1965 War.

► On 6 Sep, A Cycle Rally is planned to be taken out from BalidanStambh Jammu to1965 War Memorial Samba and back. The rally has been organized with the help of Jammu Hills Sports Club and other Cycle Clubs of Jammu, to express gratitude of citizens for the sacrifices made by soldiers in 1965 War.

"Honouring War Wounded Soldiers". As is said " We donot Forget and We don't Forgive".Many soldiers are Wounded in War,

who carry scares of the injuries throughout their life. Some of them have difficulty in walking and have problemeven in maintaining social contact and obligation. These soldiers have a special place in our heart. Another NGO , War Wounded Foundation has come forward to donate four modified Scooters for the soldiers ,who are disabled during war/in the course of their duty. A programme is planned by Army, where these Disabled Soldiers will be presented with Modified Scooters,by War Wounded Foundation. The NGO aims to provide psychological support to disabled soldiers by providing them with much needed mobility, without depending on others. Motivated through efforts of WWF, another NGO, "We Care" from Noida also has come forward to support the noble cause of supporting the brave soldiers.

A War Memorial stands tall at Samba, a pride reminder of the sacrifices made by our soldiers in 1965 Indo Pak War. To express gratitude to soldiers for their selfless services, a Cycle expedition is being undertaken by Citizen of Jammu , with the support of Samba Army Garrison and many NGOs. The saga of these untold stories of sacrifices will be recited to inspire the youth. Let's not forget, "The nation will remain the land of free, as long it is the land of Braves."

Leave and safety for women employees during natural disasters in Jammu Division

■ MANU KOTWAL

In regions prone to natural disasters, such as the Jammu division in India, the safety and well-being of government employees, particularly women, during such crises is a matter of paramount importance. The unique challenges posed by the region's geography and the specific vulnerabilities faced by women employees necessitate a comprehensive and sensitive approach to ensure their safety and fair treatment.

The Jammu division, characterized by its rural and hilly terrain, is frequently affected by natural disasters such as floods, cloudbursts, landslides, heavy rainfall, and snowstorms. These events often disrupt transportation, communication, and essential services, making it difficult for government employees to reach their workplaces, especially those residing in remote areas. The unpredictable nature of these calamities necessitates a robust and adaptable framework that prioritizes the well-being of all employees, with particular attention to the unique challenges faced by women.

Women employees face additional challenges due to their dual responsibilities of attending to their professional duties and ensuring the safety and well-being of their families, including children and elderly members. The societal expectations placed upon women as primary caregivers often intensify during natural disasters, creating a conflict between their professional obligations and familial duties. In many instances, departmental heads hesitate to grant leave to women employees during emergencies, forcing them to risk their lives by traveling in unsafe conditions or face the consequences of being marked absent, which can negatively impact their service records. This dilemma underscores the urgent need for a more empathetic and understanding approach within the government sector.

Such practices are not only unfair but also violate the fundamental principles of human rights, equality, and workplace sensitivity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the right to life, liberty, and security of person, while various international conventions advocate for gender equality and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace. While the Government of India and various state governments have issued guidelines emphasizing that employees' absence during natural calamities should not be considered willful negligence, the implementation of these orders on the ground, particularly in regions like Jammu division, often falls

short of expectations. The gap between policy and practice highlights the need for stricter enforcement mechanisms and greater accountability among departmental heads.

Specific challenges faced by women employees during natural disasters include:

1. **Transport Disruption:** Floods and landslides can render travel impossible, preventing women from reaching their workplaces. The lack of reliable transportation options disproportionately affects women, especially those residing in remote areas with limited access to public transport.
2. **Safety Concerns:** Traveling late at night or through dangerous routes during disasters poses significant safety risks for women. The vulnerability of women during such times necessitates enhanced security measures and safe transportation alternatives.
3. **Family Responsibilities:** Women often bear the primary responsibility for caring for children, elderly relatives, and sick family members, making it difficult for them to prioritize their professional duties during emergencies. This burden of caregiving responsibilities can create immense stress and anxiety for women employees during natural disasters.
4. **Mental Pressure:** Balancing job security with family safety creates additional emotional and physical strain for women employees. The constant worry about the well-being of their families, coupled with the pressure to maintain their professional commitments, can take a significant toll on their mental health.

The ground reality in government offices in Jammu division reveals that despite the crucial role of women employees in various departments such as education, healthcare, revenue, and panchayat, they often face immense pressure to attend work even during disasters. Women teachers struggle to reach schools when roads are blocked, nurses and paramedical staff cannot reach hospitals due to floods or landslides, and women employees from remote villages cannot make it to tehsil or district headquarters. These dedicated professionals, who form the backbone of essential services, are often forced to make impossible choices between their personal safety and their professional obligations.

Despite these challenges, many departmental officers insist on mandatory attendance, disregarding the safety and well-being of their women employees. This lack of sensitivity and flexibility needs to be addressed urgently. A change in mindset

is required, one that recognizes the unique challenges faced by women employees and prioritizes their safety and well-being above all else.

To effectively address this issue, the following measures should be implemented:

1. **Provision of Special Leave:** The government should issue clear directives granting automatic Special Casual Leave to women employees during natural disasters. This leave should be granted without any deduction in pay or benefits, and should be available for the duration of the disaster and the immediate aftermath.
2. **Work from Home:** Departments should explore the possibility of allowing women to work from home until normalcy returns. With the advancement of technology, many government tasks can be performed remotely, providing a viable alternative to mandatory office attendance during disasters.
3. **Local Authority Empowerment:** District Commissioners (Deputy Commissioners) should be authorized to grant immediate leave or relaxation for women employees during emergencies. Decentralizing decision-making authority will allow for a more responsive and flexible approach to managing employee safety during disasters.
4. **Safe Transport Arrangements:** If women are required to report in extreme situations, government vehicles or secure transport should be provided. This could include arranging for transportation in sturdy vehicles capable of navigating difficult terrain, or providing escorts to ensure their safety.
5. **Awareness and Sensitivity:** Departmental officers must be trained to understand the importance of prioritizing women's safety during disasters and to avoid forcing them to take unnecessary risks. This training should emphasize the unique challenges faced by women employees and promote a culture of empathy and understanding within the government sector.

Addressing the Issue Requires a Combined Effort From Society and Administration

Natural disasters are not merely governmental concerns but also social challenges that require a collective response. During such times, society and administration must prioritize the safety and well-being of women. Local administrations should ensure that no woman is forced to risk her life simply to mark her attendance in office. Community-based support systems can also play a crucial role in assisting

women employees during disasters, providing them with access to resources and assistance.

The recent flash flood situation in Jammu, during which all bridges on the Tawi River were closed, serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by women employees. Many women who commute to work on scooters were unable to return home due to the calamity and were forced to wait until office hours were completed. The heavy rain and subsequent flash flood created a perilous situation, with water everywhere. This incident underscores the need for proactive measures to ensure the safety of women employees during such emergencies.

In disaster-prone regions like Jammu division, a special policy for women employees is not a matter of convenience but a necessity that is directly linked to their safety, dignity, and rights. By adopting a sensitive approach, the government and departments can empower women and create a more humane and effective administrative system. This policy should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of women employees.

While natural disasters are beyond human control, ensuring fair treatment and safety for employees, especially women, is fully within the control of the government and administration. Forcing women to take life-threatening risks simply to protect their jobs is unacceptable in any civilized society. A commitment to gender equality and workplace sensitivity requires a fundamental shift in attitude and a willingness to prioritize the well-being of all employees, particularly those who are most vulnerable during times of crisis. By implementing the measures outlined above, the government can create a safer and more supportive environment for women employees in disaster-prone regions, ensuring that they are able to contribute to the public service without jeopardizing their safety and well-being. The implementation of these policies will not only protect women but also enhance the overall effectiveness and resilience of the government sector in the face of natural disasters. The safety and well-being of women employees must be a non-negotiable priority, reflecting a commitment to human rights, gender equality, and a humane and effective administrative system.

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