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### Soap as a symbol of self-reliance

R. Madhavan Nair

"Home-made soap has captured 20 per cent of the market share in our State and its popularity is steadily growing," George Pulickan, Director of the Gandhi Centre for Rural Development that is involved in promoting home-made soaps as an alternative to colourfully packaged but more expensive soaps, says.

Small units set up by the centre fashion soaps from natural ingredients such as lemon grass and herbs. Training programmes of the centre where techniques of soap-making are taught attract a large number of people. A programme on soap-making organised by the centre and the Gandhi Peace Foundation as part of a 'Swadeshi Festival' under way at Gandhigriham has been witnessing a large turnout.

"Gandhiji gave salt top priority by making it the focus of his agitation to fight the British; now, it is time for Keralites to focus on soap as a symbol of self-reliance in the fight against globalisation," Mr. Pulickan says.

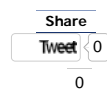
### Skin diseases

He believes the incidence of skin diseases in the State can be brought down sharply if people switch over to soaps made at home from coconut oil and spices such as vetiver and lemon grass.

To demonstrate how locally available fruits and vegetables can be used as cheaper and better substitutes for many products manufactured by multinational and foreign business houses, the centre has exhibited nearly 300 products at the Gandhigriham auditorium.

These products are made from jackfruit, nutmeg, pineapple, gooseberry, passion fruit, and rose apple. The exhibits include washing soaps, detergent powder, car wash, dish wash, shampoo, and fairness oil, all made from natural products.

The 'Swadeshi Festival' will be on till December 10. Those interested should register on ph: 94467 84514.



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