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### Swadeshi soap gives foreign firms shivers

August 15, 2011 DC Thiruvananthapuram

Tags: Hindustan Lever., Swadeshi soap

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Mahatma Gandhi used a handful of salt to shake an empire in 1930. Now the humble toilet soap 'Swadeshi' of the Gandhi Centre for Rural Development is giving the shivers to multinationals.

Without appearing in shopping malls and without huge ads, Swadeshi has made slow but steady inroads into the Kerala toilet soap market which is dominated by Hindustan Lever.

"Then salt, now soap," is our slogan, says Dr Jacob Pulickan, director of the centre who has trained thousands of people in soap making.

"A recent study by an MNC revealed that Swadeshi soaps had captured 26 per cent of the state's market."

At present, around 1 lakh people across the state are making Swadeshi soaps in their homes. Of these, around 30,000 generate regular income by selling them door to door. The raw material kits are supplied by the Centre.

"I have been making soaps for the last four years and earn Rs 20,000 per month," says Ms Latha Sunil of Pattom.



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Swadeshi soaps are made from 100 percent coconut oil while high-end brands contain only 20 percent.

They use natural perfumes and retain glycerine unlike popular brands, leaving the skin feeling smooth after a bath.

Since the soaps, priced at Rs 14 a bar, are marketed door to door, those who make them are free of many restrictive industrial laws.

The flip side is that this makes Swadeshi near invisible for ordinary consumers.

"The way out is for the government to start Milma booth-like units to market our products," said Mr Pulickan.

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**Venkat Raju** 07/09/2011 - 08:45am

It's good to hear about this Swadeshi soap. I am interested in starting this business at home. I would like to have your support and guidance to start.

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**Harikrishnan Nair** 17/08/2011 - 10:20am

I would like to start a small business in Gujarat. I just come to know about your product, Swadeshi soap. I am interested developing your product in Gujarat if i get some guidance and support.

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**jairaj** 16/08/2011 - 02:40pm

It is good to note that MNCs are scared of our swadeshi soaps. Please let me know how to start a cottage industry in Hyderabad.

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