Chapter Six

Constructive Engagement
It was a prick in conscience that confounded the Khadi discourse in this decade. It was a decade during which limitations of Khadi dawned upon its aggressive protagonists. It was discovered that spinning gave abysmally low wages, it could not by itself bring about village reconstruction, and the path hitherto pursued was contrary to principles laid down. Many of the converts had turned into rebels asserting that Khadi was most exploitative of occupation. Insiders' criticisms went into Gandhi's thinking on reorientation. His focus now veered to take into account the wages earned by the spinners. The new policy accorded all labour an equal minimum value. Mission of Khadi was reinforced to spread among the rural population. No more sales in cities could be regarded as index of the progress of the mission of Khadi. Now such an index was measured through its progress in the villages.

The year 1934 is noted for Gandhi's eventual withdrawal from the Congress and reorientation that he introduced in Khadi's organization and economics. Gandhi's withdrawal was precipitated by his gradual disillusionment with Congress. A vast, non-negotiable abyss had emerged between him and the Congress intelligentsia. There was a vast difference in outlook and method between them and him. Congress intelligentsia did not share Gandhi's faith in the Khadi and all that was associated with it. Gandhi admitted that 'My presence more and more estranges the intelligentsia from the Congress'. Secondly, there was a growing group of socialists which did not adhere fully to Gandhi's programme and method. 'My remaining in the Congress',

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1 "It should be borne in mind that under the new scheme propounded by the A.I.S.A. and A.I.V.I.A. all labour has an equal minimum value. Thus a carder who works at his bow for one hour and turns out the average quantity of cards will get exactly the same wage that the weaver, the spinner or the papermaker would, for the given quantity of their respective works per hour. Therefore the worker is free to choose and learn whatever work he can easily do, care being always taken to choose such labour whose product is easily salable in his village or the surrounding area or is in demand by the Associations." 'Fear Complex', Harijan, November 23 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 132)

2 City sales, therefore, can be no index of the progress of the mission of khadi. Khadi statistics of the future have to show the progress made from year to year in the villages. If a large number of workers are to be freed for the spread of khadi in the villages, we must reduce our labours in the cities. One way of doing it is religiously to do away with credit sales and confine our attention to those who really want khadi and appreciate the virtue of cash payment. Credit sales invariably mean increase in prices for they involve more work, i.e., more expenses. Considered from all points of view credit sales have nothing to recommend them except the doubtful convenience of a few customers. But khadi exists not for the convenience of the few. It is intended for the benefit of all. In restricting khadi sales, therefore, to cash transactions the A. I. S. A. seeks the welfare not only of the hungry millions but also of the city buyers of khadi. 'Evil of Credit sales', Harijan, December 7 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 167)
Gandhi wrote in a long letter to Patel, ‘...may interfere with free expression of those ideas, however distasteful some of them may be to me.’

He felt with poignant clarity the inability of the intelligentsia to understand the needs of the masses with whom he had identified himself. His reason, he said, took him ‘in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take, if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me’. As Gandhi wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel, he felt he seemed ‘to be obstructing the growth of the Congress’. He came to conclude ‘that the best interests of the Congress and the nation will be served by my completely severing all connection with the Congress, including the original membership.’ He felt that he was a dead weight on the Congress. The leaders were not prepared to outvote him from Congress but at the same time also disapproved his methods. He contemplated ‘voluntary retirement’. ‘My doing so will rid it of hypocrisy.

In October 1934, Gandhi formally withdrew from Congress. His withdrawal from Congress was matured by many factors. Jawaharlal’s intransigence coupled with the impatience of fast emerging Socialist group within the Congress, his own inability to carry Congress on Khadi agenda, corruption in Congress, and many other factors, more political than personal, made his resolve to resign Congress. Even loyalists such as Patel and Maulana Azad, thought that the time had arrived for him to retire. Gandhi couched his own reasons for withdrawal in a language that was unique to his creed of non-violence in thought, word, and deed. He was resigning, he said, because ‘the Congress had degenerated into an organization dominated by my own personality and that in it there was no free play of reason.’ In reality he was turned into a dummy god.

3 'There is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. My presence more and more estranges the intelligentsia from the Congress. I feel that my policies fail to convince their reason, though strange as it may appear, I do nothing that does not satisfy my own reason. But my reason takes me in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take, if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me.’ 'Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel', September 5 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 405.

4 Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, September 5 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 405.

5 Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, September 5 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 405.

6 'If the attitude of the ordinary Congressman is that no distinction need be made between truth and falsehood, violence and non-violence, khadi, calico, jagannathi and muslin, then it is best that he should act accordingly. But that won’t be possible till I leave. These restrictions cannot be removed with my consent, for I would never consent to their removal.’ 'Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel', August 19 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 329.
His prime concern of hand spinning had completely disappeared among the Congress leadership and intelligentsia. His resolutions were generously voted in Congress sessions but when it came to application they were ingeniously shuttled. It amounted to sabotage from within, all in the name of respect, loyalty, and greatness. Deification and not dedication to the cause suffocated Gandhi.

The Khadi clause had turned the hypocrisy into an art. ‘It is intolerable that there should be unashamed fraud in the observance of the Khaddar clause.’ Congressmen wore Khadi to appease Gandhi. ‘If India is to win complete independence in terms of the toiling millions and through unadulterated non-violence’, Gandhi gave vent to his undiminished conviction, ‘the spinning-wheel and Khadi have to be as natural to the educated few as to the partially unemployed and semi-starved millions…’ It was the only ‘living link’ between the Congress and millions. Yet, only a few Congressmen really had, what Gandhi called, ‘the living faith’ in the potency of Khadi and Charkha. But before withdrawing Gandhi made the last ditch effort to re-introduce Khadi in the Congress constitution. Gandhi’s proposed amendments were to reintroduce spinning franchise and to make the habitual wearing of Khadi stiffer. 7

It elicited widespread opposition. Congressmen openly defied Gandhi’s amendments. Socialists condemned it in no uncertain terms. Socialists' opposition bewildered Gandhi. 8 Gandhi wrote to Srirangasayi, a member of Socialist Party from

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7 ‘One tempting idea behind the insistence on postponement was that it would enable me to test the accuracy of my impression that a very large body of Congress intellectuals were tired of my method and views, and the programme based upon them, that I was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress, that instead of remaining the most democratic and representative institution in the country, the Congress had degenerated into an organization dominated by my one personality and that in it there was no free play of reason.’ ‘Statement to the Press’, September 17 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 3-12)

8 ‘I put the spinning-wheel and khadi in the forefront. Hand-spinning by the Congress intelligentsia has all but disappeared. The general body of them have no faith in it and yet if I could carry their reason with me, I would substitute the four-anna franchise by personal daily hand-spinning. The khadi clause of the Congress constitution has been almost a dead letter from the beginning and Congressmen have not been wanting who have reminded me that I am responsible for the hypocrisy and evasion about the working of the khadi clause.

The spinning-wheel is thus an emblem of human dignity and equality in the truest sense of the term. It is the handmaid of agriculture. It is the nation’s second lung. We are perishing because we are using only one lung.

The first amendment I would propose is to replace the words “legitimate and peaceful” by the words ‘truthful and non-violent’.

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Andhra, referring constitution of the Soviets that had labour franchise a definite place. It was clear he would not get ‘heart assent’ from the Congress. Gandhi decided to call it a day. His retirement, he wrote, was ‘neither a threat nor an ultimatum’. It was a ‘natural consequence of the rejection of amendments’.

Although he resigned from the primary membership of Indian national Congress, Gandhi continued to wield influences in the Congress proportionate to his standing in the country. It was he who presented the idea of holding the annual Congress conclave in a village. Hitherto, it were cities that had the privilege of organising the annual sessions. Gradually, Gandhi was bringing Congress to proximate village aspirations. First such Congress was held in 1936 December at Faizpur, a rural stretch in Maharashtra.

Three public activities that engaged Gandhi in his post-Congress phase were Khadi, Untouchability and Village-regeneration. Gandhi founded three distinct and yet interrelated organizations of AISA, Harijan Sevak Sangh and AIVIA to work for three activities. 'They are purely humanitarian services with no other aim than that of serving Daridranarayana.' At the root of untouchability, Khadi, and village regeneration activities non-violence was the driving motive. Gandhi’s politics

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9 'It is refreshing to know that the Socialist Party in Andhra appreciates all the amendments suggested by me. But you know in what unmeasured terms the meeting in Banaras has condemned the amendments. Even when I first conceived spinning franchise as a token of the dignity of labour and its universal recognition, a friend had shown me a booklet containing the constitution of the Soviets and drawn my attention to the fact that in Russia labour franchise had a definite place ’Letter to B Shrirangasayi’, October 6 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 140)

10 'There is no reason whatsoever why the Congress should not be able to meet even in a village. If they have business ability, the village that invites the Congress will financially not only not lose but gain. All this can only happen when we develop the instinct for identifying ourselves with the masses and desire to know them and their wants and to appreciate the beauty of village life, when it is shorn of the squalor and poverty that make it what it is today in India.' Statement to the Press, October 15 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 174-84)

11 'Notes: The Three Services', Harijan, June 22 1935, (CWMG vol.61, 189)

12 'The Greatest Force', Harijan, October 12 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 28)
revolved around spinning wheel and regenerative potential that it nurtured in its womb. Asked by a university student about the means by which he could serve the country, Gandhi replied, 'By spinning daily even and strong yarn for the sake of Daridranarayana' and 'By daily selling some Khadi on behalf of the local certified bhandar'.

But the main outcome of the session, from Gandhi's perspective, was founding of All India Village Industries Association, a body under the aegis of Congress and yet free from its encumbrances. The idea of AIVIA took shape while Gandhi was on Harijan tour. Criticism over the non-economic content in temple entry programme launched in the wake of 'Epic fast' made Gandhi to found AIVIA, a programme of village economic regeneration through the promotion and organization of rural crafts. During his tours Gandhi found that the Khadi organizations had limited presence and impact in rejuvenating the village. He discovered that those who used Khadi exclusively showed no discrimination based on manufacturing ethics in using other commodities. Khadi was becoming a lifeless symbol. Gandhi discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, Khadi could make no further progress.

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13 'Letter to a University Student', Harijan, October 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 41)
14 Gandhi invited in this task of village regeneration the co-operation of all, particularly the middle class people, for it was they, he charged, who had 'betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of potage' (CWMG vol.64: 193), allowing the cities to become 'foreign markets' and 'drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands'. (CWMG vol. 64: 118) He urged them 'to take the message of the wheel' and all that it stood for 'to the villagers and induce them to shed their laziness', for, he warned, it 'would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope'. (CWMG vol.64: 193) Gandhi welcome even foreign assistance of the right kind. In one thing, he used to tell American visitors, 'I do not mind being a beggar. I would beg of you your scientific talent. You can ask your engineers and agricultural experts to place their services at our disposal'. (CWMG vol. 64: 99) It was not only science as mechanical skill that Gandhi valued; he urged the Khadi workers to cultivate the scientific approach and method in tackling their problems, to pursue the programme 'in a deliberate, wise, methodical manner and in a scientific spirit, taking nothing for granted, testing every proposition, checking facts and figures, undaunted by defeats, unrelated by petty successes, never satisfied till the goal is reached.' This impersonal method of science, however, was to be combined with deep personal involvement and missionary dedication, for if Khadi was a science it was also a romance and gave workers like Maganlal Gandhi and Richard Gregg 'all the joy and pleasure derivable from any fascinating theme'. 'A science to be science,' Gandhi explained, 'must afford the fullest scope for satisfying the hunger of body, mind and soul', and he illustrated how 'fascinating' the subject of Khadi could be by framing a large number of questions which every Khadi worker must study. (CWMG vol. 64: 248-51)
Spirit beneath its foundation was furtherance of 'cent per cent Swadeshi'.

Gandhi introduced a new orientation in the meaning of Swadeshi. Swadeshi entrepreneurs were victim of 'self-deception' that now Gandhi wanted to clear. No longer, now, it was to be all the commodities produced within the national boundary. The old ideology emphasised the indigenous nature of the products, irrespective of the method or nature of the produce. Now manufactures from organized industry were excluded. Only those industries fell in its ambit which being village-based needed support that the government was unable to or would not support. Khadi was not the only such struggling industry. It was all small-scale, minor, unorganised industries that needed public support. It was these small industries that were under the constant threat of being wiped out by aggressive large-scale industrialization. They needed to be protected from the 'crushing competition of the power-driven machinery'. The idea was to 'return to the villagers what has been cruelly and thoughtlessly snatched away from them by the city-dwellers.' Food and clothing constituted twin objectives of Swaraj. Khadi was there. AIVIA was to ensure better and balanced diet. The real object of the Village Industries Association was to show the people how to turn waste into wealth. It was achieved by having an army of self-effacing workers.

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15 The resolution seeks to bring into being an association that will look after village industries. I have named the spirit behind it, cent per cent swadeshi. It must be autonomous like the AI SA. A political, democratic organization like the Congress cannot meddle with the work of experts, without spoiling their work and damaging the prestige of the Congress.' Statement to the Press, October 15 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 179)

16 Swadeshi, Harijan, August 10 1934, CWMG vol.58: 293.

17 'The old emphasized the indigenous nature of the products, irrespective of the method or the produce or the prospects of the product. I have ruled out organized industries, not because they are not swadeshi, but because they do not need special support.' Discussion on Swadeshi, Harijan, September 28 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 87-9)

18 'I should pick up all kinds of village crafts and industries which are about to die and deserve revival, both because of their intrinsic merit and their other useful aspects, and I should thus go on making discoveries.' Discussion on Swadeshi', Harijan, September 28 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 87-9)

19 Swadeshi, Harijan, August 10 1934, CWMG vol.58: 293.

20 Interview to Lord Faringdon, Before April 13 1935, (CWMG vol.60, 413)

21 Only public workers of exceptional purity of character could awaken the Indian villager into activity. Gandhi could not 'appreciate, much less adopt', the view that the 'character of a public worker ... is his own private concern'. CWMG vol.64: 11 A worker aspiring to serve the villagers should go and stay in a village 'like a true villager' and participate in the villagers' 'daily toil'. He should overcome attraction of the material comforts and intellectual pursuits in cities and be content with what the 'poor villagers could provide', tuning his mind 'to the reception of permanent values' embodied in
In the new conception, Khadi became the sun of the village solar system. The planets were the various rural industries which supported Khadi in return for the sustenance they derived from it.22 The All-India Village Industries Association was established on the 14th December 1934 at Wardha, which became its headquarters by reason of the financial support from Jamnalal Bajaj, to revive the ‘perishing industry’. It was a nationalist response to deindustrialization in the village. The Association, though a creation of the Congress, was deliberately made non-political and autonomous.23 Its members were pledged to abstain from any campaign of civil disobedience. The Association aimed at economic, physical and moral betterment of the villagers. It was based on the idea of decentralization.24 Even while a centralized Central Board was formed, Gandhi said, ‘We want to avoid centralization of administration; we want centralization of thought, ideas and scientific knowledge’.25 Gandhi was prepared to associate every one. The Association recognized no caste, religious, political or racial differences.26 AIVIA’s organizing secretary was JC Kumarappa. Gandhi sought the allegiance of Tagore for its advisory board. ‘Will you please allow your name to appear among such advisers of the All-India Village

the works of saints who ‘wrote and spoke for the masses’. Such a worker would, by his very presence, make the village ‘more livable and lovable’. CWMG vol. 64: 173, 407, 388, 86-7

22 ‘Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress.’ ‘Village Industries’, November 16 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 357)

23 ‘With a little scientific research and a little organizing ability the proposed new association can do a vast amount of work, if, of course, it has the backing of the people, which will be the main capital it will start with. If such an association is to succeed, it must be in the hands of those who have some knowledge of the work and abundant faith in their mission and have love for the villagers. It must be autonomous like the AISA.’ ‘Statement to the Press’, October 15 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 180)

24 The New Baby, Harijan, December 21 1934, (CWMG vol.60, 16)

25 ‘During my extensive Harijan tour last year it was clearly borne in upon me that the way in which we were carrying on our khadi work was hardly enough either to universalize khadi or to rejuvenate the villages. I saw that it was confined to a very few. Khadi was thus becoming a lifeless symbol, and I saw that, if the state of things was allowed to go on, khadi might even die of sheer inanition. Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh, on or before November 30 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 411)

26 Membership of All India Village Industries Association, Harijan, February 22 1935, (CWMG vol.60, 247-8)
Government took its own measures to counter Gandhi's village revitalization programme. It proposed allotment of one crore of rupees to the provinces for the economic development and improvement of the rural areas. In the formation of AIVIA, the government saw a personal triumph of Gandhi. Government issued circulars forestalling the activities of the Village Industries Association. Government suspected that Association shall enable Gandhi forge closer linkage with villages. This could be utilized for organizing civil disobedience. Gandhi was cautious enough to reject any conflict of interest between his programme and that of the government. He emphasized the non-political nature of both A.I.S.A. and A.I.V.I.A. His only objective, Gandhi said, was to abolish idleness. 'I dare not think of land improvement and improvement in the methods of agriculture, for I know my limitations, and I want people to do all that they can do without any outside help.' Civil disobedience would be organized independently.

Unlike during Khadi campaign now Gandhi did not think of undertaking nationwide tours. 'Undertaking an all-India tour just now would be for tackling the extent instead of the depth. There was no doubt that such a tour would bring money, and I will be giving superficial instructions about the work, that too without knowing anything of the difficulties that face village workers.' To carry forward his village revitalization programme, in 1936, Gandhi settled at Segaon, a small village near Wardha with a population of barely 600, later to be renamed into Sewagram, the

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27 'The All-India Village Industries Association which is being formed under the auspices of the Indian National Congress will need the assistance of expert advisers in the various matters that will engage its attention. 'Will you please allow your name to appear among such advisers of the All-India Village Industries Association? Naturally I approach you in the belief that the object of the Association and the method of approach to its task have your approval.' 'Letter to Rabindranath Tagore', November 15 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 350)

28 The Government had proposed allotment of one crore of rupees to the provinces for the economic development and improvement of the rural areas in order to forestall Congress activities in the villages and had issued a confidential circular in this connection. 'Interview to the Press', January 10 1935, (CWMG vol.60, 72)

29 'Both A.I.S.A. and A.I.V.I.A. are absolutely non-political associations.' 'Letter to Easihr Mencen', January 17 1935, (CWMG vol.60, 88)

Village of Service, to live amongst the poor and ‘show them how to live’.\textsuperscript{31} Gandhi went back to doing what he had started at the very beginning of his career in South Africa. To build by doing directly. It was a challenge to Gandhi. As he written to his son:

> ‘In the summer, living in a village appears grand indeed, but it is doubtful whether one would enjoy it in the monsoon. Personally, I think it would be very difficult for me to go to any place I like during the rainy season. My dislike of dirt is increasing, not diminishing. I feel suffocated if the lavatory is the least bit unclean. Here, I go to an open space to answer the call of nature, carrying a hoe with me. I dig up before passing stools and, when I have finished, I leave the place after covering it with plenty of earth. I have realized that, because of our failure to observe this rule, innumerable diseases are spread, millions of flies bred. Those who are not particularly sensitive to lack of cleanliness are, I find, happy enough in a village.’\textsuperscript{32}

A time came when reorientation of Khadi movement became a necessity. Factors that went into reorientation were:

1. Khadi had stiffened into an establishment
2. Khadi alone could not provide sufficient livelihood for the famished masses
3. Growing cloth import from Japan presented a new threat and that made import-substitution campaign for British cloth strategically irrelevant.
4. Worker driven movement was failing to enlarge the base of the movement. The Khadi workers were not sufficiently equipped to carry further the movement's goal. Their ignorance of science of spinning kept the income from spinning low. Lack of attention to detail arrested the output.
5. Khadi was inadvertently serving more of affording class of consumers than the needy producers. Conversion of city-dwellers into Khadi-consumers was faulty business strategy. The rural women and men were producing Khadi. But they were not its consumers.
6. Packaging the product to compete in market was a doomed strategy

\textsuperscript{31} 'Just now I am endeavouring to concentrate at the centre and the neighbouring village to give myself and co-workers first-hand instructions.' Interview to the Bombay Chronicle, May 22 1935, (CWMG vol 61, 86)

\textsuperscript{32} Letter to Devdas Gandhi, July 1918, 14, 512
7. Lack of suitable workers; training was not contributing in growth of equipped workers
8. Growing specter of violence could engulf every inhabitant of earth if effort for creating autonomous humans was not launched.

Khadi was founded on concerns that were opposite to ordinary business motive. Its measures of self-evaluation were not the chart of profit and growth but its contribution in poverty-amelioration. The spinners were at the core of the organization of Khadi. Its economic theory was such that the prices realized returned to the prime producers, the spinners, while others were given just the hire-charges. As the majority of spinners were poor and desolate, any adherence to uniform standards in spinning could hardly be expected. A spinner was a human and not machine and therefore susceptible to all kind of vulnerability.

In February 1934, Gandhi wrote a letter to Vithaldas Jerajani suggesting re-orienting the course of Khadi organization. Jerajani was told that focus of spreading Khadi must now shift from cities to village. 'We should assume that the age of cities for this work is over.' Khadi must find local market, instead of catering to distant cities. 'Concentrating our efforts in cities has done untold harm to our aim of making Khadi a permanent feature.' 'The singular secret of Khadi lies in its salability in the place of its production and use by the manufacturers themselves.' He suggested selling unbleached Khadi alone. Some Khadi Bhandars were having their Khadi dyed

33 a. We must sell unbleached khadi, though we may get it bleached on special request.
   b. We must now spread khadi in villages. The age of cities for this work is over.
   c. We must refuse to be satisfied that khadi has spread till all khadi produced in an area can be sold locally.
   d. Concentrating our efforts in cities has done harm to our aim of making khadi a permanent feature.
   e. It clearly follows from this that there should be no need to send the khadi produced in one province to other provinces. If we create several Manchesters in India, we shall kill khadi with our own hands.
   f. We should apply this rule to Bihar right now and decide that it should consume all the khadi which it produces.
      This will be the best way of using the fund.
   g. If this line of reasoning is correct, we should pay more or all our attention to the strength, evenness of texture and appearance of khadi at the production stage itself.' Letter to Vithaldas Jerajani, Feb 19 1934, (CWMG vol.57, 178)

34 "We must penetrate the spinner’s home had induce her to wear khadi made from her own yarn. This at once reduces the cost of production and ensures automatic distribution. So far, we have simply tried to manufacture khadi for the city people. From insignificant beginnings, the production of khaddar has grown to several lakhs per year. We have multiplied varieties. But that does not satisfy me now. Khadi was conceived with a much more ambitious object, i.e., to make our villages starvation-proof. This is impossible, unless the villagers will wear khadi themselves, sending only the surplus to the cities.' Interview to Khadi Workers', on or before August 24 1934, Harijan, Sept. 21 1934, CWMG vol.58: 353-5.
and bleached through mills, if not with the permission, certainly with the connivance of the AISA. This custom of having Khadi dyed and bleached through mills was going on for some years.\textsuperscript{35} According to Gandhi the practice robbed Khadi of its durability, added to cost of production, and made it indistinguishable from mill-cloth raising the prospect of adulteration. Gandhi sought to transform sartorial tastes by according a new status to unbleached, coarse Khadi.\textsuperscript{36} It was not the quality of hand-spun thread but 'the scared touch of spinners' hand' that provided 'life and history' to Khadi. 'The art that is in the machine made article appeals only to the eye, the art in Khadi appeals first to the heart and then to the eye', Gandhi argued.

But Gandhi's advocacy of coarse, unbleached Khadi was embedded in deeper reasoning than just foisting a fashion statement. Gandhi was particularly worried about the low wages that were given to spinners. Khadi, Gandhi argued, 'was conceived with a much more ambitious project, that is, to make our villages starvation-proof'. Unfortunately, in order that Khadi provide maximum employment opportunities to semi-starved idle population it became, in due course, more consumer than producer oriented. In its eagerness to attract consumers in cities it sold at lowered prices. Bleaching added to the cost; hence, his advocacy for unbleached Khadi. Most important element of re-orientation was regarding the wages of spinners. Gandhi proposed its increase.

Whereas it was an association named after spinners and ostensibly worked for their welfare, spinners were the least paid among the Khadi artisans. Spinners also constituted majority of artisans. In October 1935, AISA, at its Wardha sitting, resolved to raise spinners' wage suitably as to give 'clothing (20 yards annually) and maintenance in accordance with a scientifically prescribed scale of minimum food requirement'. The wage was to be calculated on the basis of eight hour's efficient work. It requested all its associate agencies to permit progressive rise in the wage-scale, 'so as to reach a standard enabling each spinning family to be properly

\textsuperscript{35} 'Letter to S P Kamat', November 6 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 97)

\textsuperscript{36} 'I would, therefore, depurate the bleaching of khadi. It adds to the cost of production, affects the durability of cloth and makes the detection of fraud ever so much more difficult. We must not pamper the popular fancy, but seek to cultivate a new taste. A few washes in the ordinary course will suffice to make khadi perfectly white and give it a softness which bleaching destroys. We must make everybody contribute his or her mite to reduce all unnecessary cost.' Interview to Khadi Workers', on or before August 24 1934, Harijan, September 21 1934, CWMG vol.58: 353-5.
maintained out of earnings of its working members. The resolution further stated the mission statement of the AISA as to make every home in India self-sufficing through Khadi with reference to its clothing requirements. All artisans associated with the Khadi process were implored to use Khadi alone for their personal and familial clothing requirements. Distribution was to be primarily confined to the province where it was manufactured. The sales in the cities was to be that of surplus Khadi, producers were entitled to market their produce only after they had kept for personal use as first priority. The affiliated production and distribution units were asked to restrict their activities within their local region. The units were advised to avoid loss. The glut in the production was to be avoided by restricting operations only to those spinners who were most needy or who were solely dependent on spinning for their livelihood during lean seasons. The associate units were asked to maintain an accurate register of all the spinners and other artisans employed by them. It was also decided to pay wages, a part or the whole of it, in Khadi or other necessaries of life. This was done to ensure the use of the wages for clothing and food and not its abuse for drugs or drinks. All associate agencies were also told of their duty to promote self-sufficing Khadi. AISA also called for its associate agencies to be 'autonomous and self-supporting'. It was double pronged strategy to help speedy expansion based on expertise and resourcefulness of entrepreneurs and also protecting it from political vicissitudes and reprisals. In enforcing these policy measures Gandhi was even prepared to stop Khadi work. He wrote to Chhaganlal, who had been supervising the work of Khadi production at Vijapur, 'If no body listens to your appeal to wear Khadi or to spin for his or her own clothing or by way of service, you may leave off Khadi work.'

Although Khadi was strictly an economic proposition, the motives beneath its organization were not drawn from business concern. The 'human element' that in Adam Smith's conception of economics constituted as the 'disturbing factor'

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37 'Indeed all khadi can only be surplus khadi, for khadi will not be accepted by the Association or its branches from anyone who is not himself or herself a full wearer of khadi.' 'Three Questions', Harijan, October 5 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 10)

38 'If the women spinners there refuse to accept Khadi or they keep back a part of their yarn for their own clothing before giving it for weaving, you should give them no spinning work. Do not mind if as a result no spinner is left in Vijapur. If middleclass people wish to spin for their own requirements, you may give them the necessary facilities.' 'Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi', October 29 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 76)
preventing free play of economic laws, was center to the ‘science of Khadi’. Gandhi was speaking to a band of Khadi workers on the question of its reorganization. ‘What applies to the production of mill-cloth, therefore, does not apply to Khaddar. Debasing of quality, adulteration, pandering to the baser tastes of humanity, are current staple in commercialized production; they have no place in Khadi, nor has the principle of highest profit and lowest wages any place in Khadi.’

But the important dilemma that stared the protagonists was declining demand once Khadi’s price was raised owing to enhanced wages for spinners. It was an important issue as AISA was producing in village centres and sold at city outlets. Its campaign too was directed towards potential urban buyers. Khadi was oriented to serve city-consumers although its avid declaration was to serve the poor spinners. There was always an attempt to rationalise the price of Khadi in the eyes of its middle-class consumers. Gandhi took great pains in doing so. Wage increase was to make Khadi dearer. It could sound death knell for the nascent enterprise. The decision was seen as giving Khadi movement a ‘decent burial’. It was seen as a ‘blunder’. There were opposition also from poor Khadi wearers who showed their inability to buy dearer Khadi.

Gandhi ignored the protests asserting Khadi sold even when its quality and variety was abysmally limited and it was also relatively dearer. ‘The association must not be deterred from doing the just thing by the spinners for fear of the public demand falling.’ He countered the protests by saying that, ‘Whilst the buyers have been benefiting all these many years, the spinners had till now practically no benefit whatsoever in the shape of rise in wages.’ Spinners, by the very nature of their work, could not combine in association to demand betterment of wages. His point was that ‘systematic propaganda’ could help in retaining its customer-base even if price-rise was introduced.39 He even advised the units to cater only really needy alone. They could exclude those ‘petty cultivators who employ labour and who are not ordinarily in want of food’. The Association was told to focus primarily on those ‘landless and

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39 ‘Since the talk of the rise in the wages of spinners khadi-lovers are filled with all kinds of vague fears. For instance, they fear a fall in the public demand for khadi in view of a rise in its price. The Association must not be deterred from doing the just thing by the spinners for fear of the public demand falling. It must, however, if need be, remove from its list of spinners those who do not need the support of spinning for their food.’ ‘A Knotty Question’, Harijan, October 5 1935, (CWMG vol 62, 11)
property-less workers who would starve partially or wholly but for the work found by AISA and give them minimum subsistence wages. Spinners were compulsorily given part of their wages in Khadi.

AISA's certification process was also questioned as it restricted private Khadi producers. The restriction, it was said, was imposed intentionally in the interest of artisans, especially the spinners. Those opposed to the idea of enhanced wages claimed AISA being a non-registered body had no power to dictate upon them its policies. They therefore continued to manufacture and distribute uncertified Khadi at the prices suiting consumer needs. They rejected AISA's new policy regarding spinners wage equalization. Gandhi said of the defiance as a breach of the moral and social code. AISA also adopted some propaganda tools to counteract the growth of uncertified Khadi. In Tamil Nadu, its members conducted house-to-house campaign, private-lectures, and distributed pamphlets in a bid to educate the spinners to abstain from spinning at lower rates.

AISA tried to meet the raised cost of Khadi production due to its policy of giving 'living wages' to the spinners partly by trimming and making the production efficient and partly by increasing the sales-price of Khadi. AISA goal was to give eight anna for eight hour of work. It however could only achieve 3 anna for eight hour of work in place of its avowed policy of eight anna. The increase in the wage was evenly distributed between price-increase and efficiency. It also simultaneously worked on improving the quality of Khadi. It was hoped that more scientific knowledge would improve the capacity of hand-gins, carding bows, and spinning wheels. Greater observation of spinners' work must result in their being more skilled and more efficient. Greater grasp of administrative detail and greater faithfulness must mean a substantial decrease in overhead charges. In other words, our ignorance of the

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40 'The restrictions on private producers are intended as well in the interests of artisans, especially the spinners, as the buyers. If they are removed the market will be flooded with spurious khadi resulting in spinners being put out of work and the buyers being deceived.' 'For Khadi Weavers', Harijan, July 4 1936, (CWMG vol.63, 115)

41 'It is certainly wrong of the erstwhile certified-khadi merchants to continue their trade in uncertified khadi after refusing to conform to the new rules about khadi and thus making themselves unfit for certificates. Their conduct is unpatriotic and unhuman. They ought not to exploit the poor spinners and to a much lesser degree the credulous buyers. I would urge them to conform to the new rules and take out certificates, or if they are not satisfied with the new scale, to take to some other business. It ill becomes them to retort that the A.I.S.A. is not a registered body and that therefore they can do what they like.' 'Uncertified Khadi', Harijan, April 11 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 320)
The science of khadi is at the bottom of our present inability to reach the goal of eight annas per day. The resolution is intended as a spur to effort.\textsuperscript{42}

The reduction in the cost of Khadi was to be accompanied by a steep rise in the wages of spinners. Cost was to be reduced by inducing producers themselves wear their produced clothes, cutting down the overhead cost, adopting coarse, unbleached Khadi—processing Khadi added to its cost. Cost cutting was not to adversely affect the wages of spinners; rather it was to be raised. Khadi not ordinarily being a commercial, profit driven business concern, the rules governing the reduction in cost differed. ‘In Khadi, there is a limitation to the improvement of tools. But there is no limitation to the improvement of human intelligence and honesty.’ The cost-reduction in Khadi was achieved by the gradual elimination of middlemen which shall eventually be rendered obsolete when Khadi becomes self-supporting and self-acting.\textsuperscript{43}

AISA’s resolve to pay eight annas for an eight hour of work was oblivious of ground realities. It was met by rising stock, declining sales, and closures of production centres. This even when only Maharashtra branch of AISA could pay three anna; rest of the provincial branches were still paying at the old rates. It was borne upon the nationalist entrepreneurs that despite all philanthropic and patriotic sentiments, the middle class Khadi buyers simply did not had money to buy Khadi at the increased price necessitated by the rise in wages beyond the point of three annas. The ambition of giving eight anna wage for an eight hour of work was truncated to three anna for the same amount of work. Khadi workers reported that three annas was a saturation

\textsuperscript{42} ‘I have no manner of doubt that if only the workers will themselves be more efficient, more vigilant and more faithful, they will hasten the day when spinners can easily earn eight annas per day of eight hours’ work without involving a phenomenal rise in the sale price. More scientific knowledge must improve the capacity of hand-gins, carding-bows and spinning-wheels. Greater observation of spinners’ work must result in their being more skilled and more efficient. Greater grasp of administrative detail and greater faithfulness must mean a substantial decrease in overhead charges.’ ‘Spinners’ Wages’, Harijan, April 17 1937), (CWMG vol.65, 90)

\textsuperscript{43} ‘Our overhead charges are today much too high for me. If we concentrate attention on the central mission of khadi, they will be considerably reduced. The rules governing the reduction of the price of khadi are somewhat, if not wholly, different from those that apply to purely commercial articles produced chiefly for profit. In khadi, there is a limitation to the improvement of tools. But there is no limitation to the improvement for human intelligence and honesty. If we despair of these two, we must despair of khadi. In khadi, therefore, we reduce cost by eliminating middlemen as far as is consistent with the smooth running of the organization, which itself will be unnecessary when khadi is self-supporting and self-acting.’ Interview to Khadi Workers, on or before August 24 1934, Harijan, Sept. 21 1934, CWMG vol.58: 353-5.
point and any crossing the threshold would amount to collapse of the whole organization owing to production glut. But even the scale of three annas cannot be sustained if the Provincial Governments did not come to the rescue. They could do so both through legislative and administrative effort. Gandhi wanted the provincial governments to regard AISA and other sister organizations (the A.I.V.I.A. and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh) as their own expert, voluntary and honorary agencies. If the Provincial Governments will take the fullest advantage of the three expert constructive bodies, viz., A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A. and Hindustani Talimi Sangh, they will find the maximum amount of productive work with the minimum expenditure of money and energy. Gandhi added that in other countries governments see that the goods produced under its supervision are given first preference in the market. Procuring purchasers was becoming greatest obstacle in the mission of AISA. The moment provincial governments' came under the Congress, AISA implored them to buy its products indiscriminately.

As resolved, the focus of the new phase was self-sufficing Khadi. It was to receive first priority in the scheme of associate units, though production for self-sufficing and sales was to go together. Even if each village was to become self-sufficing in its Khadi requirement, Khadi was to be the centre of village industries programme. It was hoped that out of self-sufficing Khadi would follow commercial Khadi as a matter of course. Further, they were to get a relatively quantum leap in their wage 'without having expected or demanded it'. It was also thought that it would be comparatively easier to bring change in the clothing content of village artisans as AISA/AIVIA activists would be closely associated with their uplift.

Although founded as Gandhi-loyalist response to Swarajist betrayal of movement as designed and pursued by Gandhi, Gandhi Sewa Sangh saw a resurgent phase in the immediate aftermath of Gandhi’s withdrawal from Congress, in 1934. Gandhi’s close non-political associates reactivated the moribund organization that had

44 Spinners' Wages, Harijan, April 17 1937, CWMG vol.65, 90.
45 Among Criminal Tribes, Harijan, August 26 1939, CWMG vol.70: 103.
46 'Khadi will certainly occupy the centre of the village industries. But remember that we have to concentrate on making the villages self-sufficing in khadi. Out of self-sufficing khadi will follow commercial khadi as a matter of course.' Speech to village workers’, October 22 1935, CWMG vol.62, 59.
been founded in the wake of Gandhi’s arrest in 1922. Its ostensible purpose was to uphold and persevere with the constructive programme that Gandhi had given identity to during the non-co-operation movement. Gandhi Sewa Sangh was to identify with Gandhian vision of national struggle through constructive work in contrast to Swarajist method of Council-entry. It was founded in Gandhi’s absence on 23rd July 1923 at Wardha. Its moving force was Jamnalal Bajaj who also became its founding President. The founding members of the Sangh were Gandhi’s loyal political colleagues who had steadfastly fighting within the Congress to keep his agenda afloat. They were collectively called as 'No-changers' whose rivals 'Pro-changers' wanted Congress to participate in the elections to Council after the arrest of Gandhi in the beginning of 1923. The important 'No-changers' were Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari and Sardar Patel who were present at Wardha when collective decision to foist the Sangh was taken. They were also its founding trustees. Its main objective was to offer financial and moral support to the whole-time workers in the cause of non-cooperation as conceived and conducted by Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever the objectives its intention was to create and sustain an alternative band of cadre that could rival Congress. Just as Gandhi’s agenda was alternative to Congress traditional wisdom of cooperation with government, Sangh was an outfit alternative to the Congress.

Gandhi Sewa Sangh was a registered body under the Registration of Charitable Societies XXI of 1860. Sangh’s control, guidance and management were vested in the Board of Trustees. Each of the five trustees, Rajaji, Patel, Prasad, Gangadhar Deshpande, and Bajaj, were responsible for the organization of Sangh and its activities in their respective regions. Its finances came from Bajaj. Bajaj made first donation of two and half lac rupees. Admission to Sangh was restricted to non-cooperators and to those who believed in specific Gandhian tenets of truth and ahimsa. In its formative years its main task was to provide financial support to full time workers and their families. Gandhi himself was not on the Board. He kept a distance from its proceedings till mid-thirties when organization was reorganized with changed priorities.

It was ten years after its foundation that Gandhi Sewa Sangh really got its moorings. In the immediate aftermath of his withdrawal from Congress, Gandhi Sewa
Sangh began its annual gathering. At its second annual meeting held in February 1936, GSS decided to hold all its sessions in villages. Each session had an exhibition of local manufactures and crafts. The exhibition housed artifacts related to village economic life that were viable enough to be revived. Aims of such an exhibition were distinct from that of museum. Its third session as a new-born organization was held at Hubli, Karnataka in April 1937. All the close comrades of Gandhi participated in the deliberation. Most of the close comrades of Gandhi, his actual colleagues in his constructive work, are not to be found in the annals of Indian history writing. While his political colleagues espousing constitutional and political course got their share of historical limelight, his colleagues in constructive work barely got remembered.

In the popular consciousness, GSS, in Gandhi’s post-Congress phase, was seen as an alternative outfit to the Congress. At Hudli, it was widely rumored that if Faizpur Congress was Jawaharlal’s, the Hudli congress of GSS was Gandhi’s response to it. Whether as an organization GSS could have rivaled with Congress’ base or not is left to historical speculation, but frequency of its national meet did increase and Gandhi’s attention on it increased in direct proportion to his distancing from Congress. The perceived rivalry between Gandhi and Nehru occupied Gandhi’s attention so much so that he devoted his opening speech at Hudli to it. ‘It is a sin to imagine even in jest that there can be any rivalry between Jawaharlal and me, or the Congress and the Gandhi Seva Sangh. The Gandhi Seva Sangh is not opposed to the Congress.’ The very acknowledgment of rumours gave further credence to the perceived rivalry. Gandhi however tried to bury the rumour. ‘How could the Sangh be opposed to the Congress when it was conceived in order to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress?’ The Congress represented the country. The Sangh members represented only themselves. It was an organ committed to Congress and its

47 'We must also see that we do not confuse the aims of such exhibitions with those of a museum. There can be a display of ancient things which have no connection with our economic life. But such museums should be where they belong; they have no place in our sessions. Our duty is to concentrate on only those industries and crafts which are capable of being revived. Now when you go and see the exhibition, also note what things are not there and what could have been included.' Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh Meeting-I, Savli, February 29 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 213)

48 'How could the Sangh be opposed to the Congress when it was conceived in order to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress... It would be better to change the name of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. You have associated my name with the Sangh. This does not mean that my field of operation is limited only to this. I wish to make the whole of India my field of activity. I have suggested a way and you have accepted it. But it is not good for us to worship an individual. Only an ideal or a principle can be worshipped.' Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh, Hudli-I, April 16 1937, (CWMG vol.65, 88)
programme of constructive work as laid down in 1920. It was not an institution created under the Congress. In that sense it was a voluntary organization unlike bodies such as AISA or AIVIA which were created under the Congress mandate. It had come into existence in 1923, at a time when Gandhi lay imprisoned and there was threat of dilution and abandonment of the programme of non-cooperation and other constructive agenda. Because of its moorings, the constructive work was its permanent agenda. It was this commitment that made its revival in the wake of Gandhi's withdrawal from Congress possible. Gandhi's firm belief was that if due to the exigencies of its politics and constituting elements, Congress left constructive programme it would be an announcement of its own death. It was the constructive programme that provided grassroots support to the political work of the Congress. Many of the political workers were the members of AISA who were also the Sangh members. Sangh members interacted maximally with the electorates. In 1937, issue of GSS members' participation into elections aroused. Gandhi had moved from being a non-cooperator to even advocating acceptance of the ministerial responsibility. GSS was primarily formed to advocate Gandhi's constructive agenda. It was therefore in quandary with respect to participation in elections. Gandhi advised participation on grounds that suitable candidates could only be found in GSS. Also, such members then could force Congress ministries to implement the constructive agenda. When questioned on his own withdrawal from Congress when he was advising GSS members to strengthen Congress by participating in the election, Gandhi said that his withdrawal was also calculated to serve the organization better. Participation of GSS members as candidates and campaigners in the election ensured Congress victory.49

49 'Jawaharlal has said that if we go into the Legislatures today we cannot pursue Truth and non-violence. If Truth and non-violence cannot be pursued, then democracy also cannot be practised, for in that case it will be against Truth and non-violence. But the question is, if we stop everyone who is with us from going into the Councils, will it not harm our own work? For where will the Congress find men? And members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh did just this. I feel that they have done their duty. If they had not done so the Congress would not have been victorious in the same degree as it is. The Sangh is of no importance as compared with the Congress. The Congress is of the millions. We cannot leave it. It has accepted this programme on a permanent basis.' Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh', Hudli-II, April 17 1937, (CWMG vol.65, 99-106)
GSS faced a minor rebellion of sort when its president Kishorelal Mashruwala resigned owing to differences over the participation in election.\(^{50}\) Gandhi refused its acceptance. Kishorelal had felt that by going for election GSS was giving up truth and non-violence. His argument was that parliamentary programme was full of temptations. Gandhi argued that the programme had created an enthusiasm among the members. Most of the members favoured participation while at the same time many others saw the electoral endeavour as diversion from the main vocation. Council entry was important to avoid its occupation by non-desirable elements. The cause of Charkha required its adherents to enter Councils. 'If everyone going there believes in the Charkha, the effectiveness of the Charkha will increase.' If those with faith in Charkha enter legislatures, the institution too shall become an effective means to furthering the cause of Charkha. But neither the Sangh nor the Councils was open to all. Gandhi attempted to withhold permission from those opposing constructive programme. And Sangh gave membership only to those who had faith in Charkha with 'wide interpretations'. Gandhi and his ilk were speaking a language reminiscent of Swarajist arguments in favour of their programme of Council-entry. The ethos had come full circle.

GSS was the citadel of Gandhi's indigenous intellectuals. There were 'those who intelligently and thoughtfully developed spinning into a science'. The AISA or AIVIA were action bodies with limited mandates. GSS was the apex body of Gandhian workers. Gandhi repeatedly asserted its voluntary status and declaimed any rivalry with Congress. It was a mighty tree of which AISA and AIVIA and other such offshoots were its branches. GSS members were permitted with approval from Congress Working Committee to participate in elections to Legislative Assembly. It was done according to the strategy of expanding the constructive work. Council programme was not an alternative or in addition to constructive work. 'The Sangh exists for the very purpose of keeping constructive work alive. For making it

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\(^{50}\) ‘But if we come pledging ourselves to truth, non-violence, fearlessness and unselfishness and accept Ministerships on our own conditions, we can win the battle of swaraj and establish a constitution of our own making in place of the present one.’ "Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh", Hudli-III, April 20 1937 (CWMG vol.65, 116-134)
interesting and for spreading it.' Gandhi regarded constructive work as the mark of truth and non-violence. Council entry facilitated the expansion of constructive work.⁵¹

Faithful implementation of constructive programme was itself a political programme and education for village. 'To me there is no political education apart from the constructive programme', Gandhi reiterated. Political education was the natural outcome of constructive agenda. Gandhi spoke of having no hidden agenda beneath the constructive programme. It was such a course that distinguished it from missionaries, he argued. 'The way to political education was by rendering silent, selfless service.' The masses were not to be approached with instrumentalist vision. Thus fighting poverty through Khadi was biggest political education. It was for this reason that Khadi, seemingly apolitical, was fraught with immense political manifestations.

Gandhi discouraged distinction between constructive and political work. In his conception even political work was constructive. Both, political and constructive works were the two branches of Satyagraha. Each complemented the other. Among the members of Gandhi Sewa Sangh there was tendency to deride the political work and those associated with it. Although Gandhi was against any 'watertight compartments' he encouraged exclusive memberships. Just as he had called for autonomous status for bodies of constructive work such as AISA, AIVIA and others, he also discouraged dual membership. Constructive workers were not required to court imprisonment during civil disobedience movement as their work suffered. The work of constructive was as valuable as courting imprisonment. The constructive work did not inspire same intensity of engagement as political activities did. It was at the behest of Gandhi that a Congress Parliamentary Board was instituted. Yet, initially Gandhi was reluctant to allow constructive workers participate in the elections.⁵²

⁵¹ 'The Sangh exists for the very purpose of keeping constructive work alive, for making it interesting and for spreading it from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to Dibrugarh. This is because constructive work has been regarded as the mark of truth and non-violence. For its success contact has to be established with three crores of voters. In order to make this contact effective, if some members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh have to enter Legislatures, it becomes a clear duty of the Sangh to make provision for it.' 'Duties of Gandhi Seva Sangh', 'Harijan Bandhu', May 9 1937 (CWMG vol.65, 182)

⁵² Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh Meeting-III, Savli, March 3 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 228)
Gandhi’s indifference to political problems did not mean that he had turned his back on the fight for freedom. It was, he asserted, ‘a fight to finish’, but it was a non-violent fight and civil-disobedience was not the only process of non-violence. ‘In the garden of non-violence there are many plants’, Gandhi explained, and he was then nurturing the plant of economic, moral, and social regeneration of India’s villages. Political independence, which for Gandhi meant, ‘sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority’, was linked with ‘economic independence’ achieved through ‘the economic uplift of every individual, male and female, by his or her own conscious effort’. The edifice of such poorna Swaraj required for its building the participation of the masses on the widest scale possible; parliamentary programme, which the Congress had taken up, undoubtedly helped, but Gandhi saw that its usefulness was limited, what with the franchise being extremely restricted, with no more than 311/2 out of 35 crores voting. He therefore turned to the 311/2 crores in the villages, educating them, infusing in them the consciousness of their numerical strength till there was no need for either civil disobedience or violence. It was ‘a kind of practical adult education to be put to use as it progresses’. The villagers were to be ‘taught to know what they should want and how to obtain it in the shape of sanitation and hygiene, improvement of material conditions and social relations’. Drawing a picture of an ideal village, Gandhi pointed out that almost ‘the whole of the programme...can be worked out...without Government assistance’ if the villagers

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53 'Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists. It is true, however, that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence.' 'So-called Inconsistencies', Harijan, February 20 1937, (CWMG vol.64, 385)

54 'Let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic.' 'Speech at Exhibition Ground', Faizpur, December 27 1936, (CWMG vol.64, 191-2)

55 'This is a kind of practical adult education to be put to use as it progresses. The centre is automatically shifted from the cities to the villages. They will be taught to know what they should want and how to obtain it in the shape of sanitation and hygiene, improvement of material conditions and social relations. If this primary education is taken by them in its fullness everything else follows.' 'Discussion with Basil Mathews and others', November 24 1936, (CWMG vol.64, 71)
could be persuaded ‘to help themselves’ through ‘mutual co-operation’ and to ‘contribute voluntary labour for the common good’. 56

The ideological division between Gandhi and Nehru acquired a new, sharp dimension. Nehru was impatient with Gandhi’s village reform programme. He alleged that Gandhi was guilty of ‘supporting a system which involves a continuous and devastating class war’. Nehru effectively said that Gandhi, in the garb of non-violence was approving a system based essentially on violence. He further found Gandhi ‘of criticizing and condemning people for more or less minor faults and praising others who are guilty of far more important failings’. 57 Referring of his differences with Nehru, Gandhi wrote to a common friend that ‘Jawaharlal’s way is not my way. I do not accept practically any of his methods. My method is designed to avoid conflict. His is not so designed.’ 58 To Nehru Gandhi wrote: ‘Somehow or other everything I say and even perhaps do jars on you.’ 59 In 1936, Nehru, as a President of Congress, visited a Khadi Bhandar in Bombay. The Hindu of May 18, 1936 reported that Nehru expressed doubts over Khadi’s economic utility. He, therefore, favoured development of machinery. 60 His colleagues in Congress expressed sharp difference over the reported speech of Nehru. Vallabhbhai wrote to Rajendra Prasad saying that Nehru’s speech disturbed him. ‘It will recoil on him if he goes on in this fashion. Nehru takes a Garb of ‘injured innocence’, he says the report is not correct and he had issued a

56 ‘But my task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves if they have mutual co-operation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. I am convinced that they can, under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income.’ ‘A Humble villager of Birbhum’, Harijan, January 9 1937, (CWMG vol.64, 217)

57 ‘I am not guilty of ‘supporting a system which involves a continuous and devastating class war’ or expressing approval of systems based essentially on himsa or ‘of criticizing and condemning people for more or less minor faults and praising others who are guilty of far more important failings.’ ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, May 11 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 391)

58 ‘I would love to kill the New Constitution today if I can. There is hardly anything in it I like. But Jawaharlal’s way is not my way. I accept his ideal about land, etc. But I do not accept practically any of his methods. I would strain every nerve to prevent a class war. So would he, I expect. But he does not believe it to be possible to avoid it. I believe it to be perfectly possible especially if my method is accepted.’ ‘Letter to Agatha Harrison’, April 30 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 353)

59 ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, April 5 1937, (CWMG vol.65, 55)

60 ‘Mr. Nehru when he visited the Khadi Bhandar today expressed doubts as to whether hand-spinning and weaving were an economic proposition. From his experiences in the united Provinces, he could say that it was not so. He, therefore, favoured development of machinery.’ ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, May 21 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 425)
correct version of his speech next day though. I have not seen it reported anywhere.\textsuperscript{61} Gandhi later mediated between Nehru and his aggrieved colleagues.\textsuperscript{62}

Nehru replied after Gandhi enquired: 'What I had said was that for many reasons—economic, political, social—Khadi was an important item in our present programme and must be encouraged, but that I did not think that it could finally solve our poverty problem, especially if the present social system continued. This system transferred the improvements and additional earnings of the peasant to the landlord. But I pointed out that this theoretical argument did not apply today. For this I said that although I was in favour of big industry, I believed that even with the increase of industrialization there would be considerable room for the development of cottage industries in India.' Gandhi wrote calling concern over Nehru's opinion as 'A false alarm'.\textsuperscript{63} He said that even if Khadi did not receive unstinted support from Nehru, it had a sufficient number of confirmed believers whose faith in it was based on their own knowledge. 'If it is still a derived faith, the prophecy of a great journalist will undoubtedly come true that on my death Khadi will also die and that the wheels that would be broken after the natural event would be sufficient for full cremation of the body.' Gandhi in response to Nehru's views also wrote an article titled: Is Khadi Economically Sound?

When media reports insinuated trouble between 'two rivals', Gandhi used Harijan to convey his rebuttal with an article titled 'Are we rivals'?\textsuperscript{64} It was rumoured

\textsuperscript{61} 'Re: khadi—he says the report is not correct and he had issued a correct version of his speech next day though. I have not seen it reported anywhere. His reply about the W. C. is bad enough and I don't think I can swallow it.' 'Letter from Vallabhbhai Patel to Rajendra Prasad', May 29 1936, (CWMG vol.62, 476)

\textsuperscript{62} 'You feel to be the most injured party. The fact is that your colleagues have lacked your courage and frankness. The result has been disastrous. I have always pleaded with them to speak out to you freely and fearlessly. But having lacked the courage, whenever they have spoken they have done it clumsily and you have felt irritated. I tell you they have dreaded you, because of your irritability and impatience of them. They have chafed under your rebukes and magisterial manner and above all your arrogation of what has appeared to them your infallibility and superior knowledge. They feel that you have treated them with scant courtesy and never defended them from socialists' ridicule and even misrepresentation.' 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', July 15 1936, (CWMG vol.63, 145)

\textsuperscript{63} 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', October 10 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 16)

\textsuperscript{64} 'One of the articles presents Jawaharlal and me as rivals. I cannot think of myself as a rival to Jawaharlal or him to me. Or if we are, we are rivals in making love to each other in the pursuit of the common goal, and if in the joint work for reaching the goal we at times seem to be taking different routes, I hope the world will find that we had lost sight of each
that Gandhi had averred that Nehru’s policy had ‘ruined’ Gandhi’s ‘life-work’. Gandhi plainly refused that he ever had said such a thing. Gandhi admitted of difference of opinion on policies. His philosophy of life, he said, excluded the ‘possibility of harm to one’s cause by outside agencies’. ‘We remain the same adherents to the Congress goal that we have ever been.’ But a just month later, Gandhi almost pathetically was pleading with Nehru, ‘Why is it that with all the will in the world I cannot understand what is so obvious to you? I am not, so far as I know, suffering from intellectual decay.’

The distance was growing as is obvious from Gandhi’s letter to Nehru on April 25 1938. Gandhi wrote, ‘It hurts me that, at this very critical juncture in our history, we do not seem to see eye to eye in important matters.’ He was feeling lonely, just the way Nehru felt in twenties, when he did not understand Gandhi’s political maneuvers. But the distance kept on growing so much so that even in 1942, prior to the launch of Quit India Movement, Gandhi was refuting insinuated estrangement and declaring Nehru being ‘the successor’. ‘When I am gone he will do what I am doing now. Then he will speak my language too. He fights with me because I am there. Whom will he fight when I am gone? And who will suffer his fighting? Ultimately, he will have to speak my language. Even if this does not happen, I would at least die with this faith.’

The difference between Gandhi and Nehru on the economic aspects was, as Gandhi himself said, ‘difference...of emphasis’. Nehru believed in industrialization; Gandhi had ‘grave doubts about its usefulness for India’. Nehru, moreover, believed in the inevitability of class conflict, though, as Gandhi said, ‘he would avoid it if he

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65 'Why is it that with all the will in the world I cannot understand what is so obvious to you? I am not, so far as I know, suffering from intellectual decay. Should you not then set your heart on at least making me understand what you are after? I may not agree with you. But I should be in a position to say so. Yesterday’s talk throws no light on what you are after.' ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, August 28 1936, (CWMG vol.63, 249)

66 ‘I can’t tell you how positively lonely I feel to know that nowadays I can’t carry you with me. I know that you would do much for affection. But in matters of state, there can be no surrender to affection, when the intellect rebels.’ ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, April 25 1938, (CWMG vol.67, 47)

67 ‘We have many groups amongst us. One is represented by Jawaharlal. Let those who think the constructive programme is insipid know that there is nothing in the Working Committee’s resolution to prevent a Congressman at his own risk from leading civil disobedience—individual or mass.’ ‘Speech at AICC Meeting’, Wardha, Jan. 15 1942, (CWMG vol.75, 225)
could.’ Gandhi saw no such necessity. He expected ‘to convert the zamindars and other capitalist by non-violent methods’, for, he argued, ‘if the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power’. The difference was borne out of Gandhi’s faith in absolute non-violence. Jawaharlal mistrusts the human race a little. He says we would not be able to do anything there. He therefore places his faith in class struggle. This is the fundamental difference between him and me.... I say capital is insentient but the capitalist is not so. It is possible to change his heart. He says this has never happened before. For Gandhi non-violence was a matter of creed. For Nehru it was not so. Gandhi gave sovereign place to non-violence. ‘Swaraj coming through violence will be no Swaraj for me.’

Nehru often accused the passivity of AISA members. He regarded Charkha-adherents to be fanatics lacking in ‘intellect’. It was no discipline to spin like automatons. Gandhi too often criticized the ‘Charkhawalla’ for lacking enough faith to make Charkha a ‘living image’ that could induce change. Gandhi did not admit that plying Charkha stunted growth of intellect. In educated there was no ‘development of intellect, only a play of intellect’. The plying of Charkha if done unlike automatons but with faith it shall contribute in the development of knowledge and action, that is, both the intellect and the organs of the body. One needs to understand the science of spinning while one is spinning. Charkha was a ‘symbol of ahimsa’. ‘Truth and non-violence develop the body, the intellect and the spirit.’

At about the time Gandhi was waxing eloquence on the efficacy of Charkha, Nehru was conducting a meeting of newly constituted Planning Committee. Gandhi’s representative on the Committee was J C Kumarappa, the Secretary of All India Village Industries Association. Kumarappa was humiliated and ousted. Nehru even

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68 ‘Yes, we seem to differ in our ideas of village uplift and reconstruction. The difference is of emphasis. He does not mind the village uplift movement. He believes in industrialization; I have grave doubts about its usefulness for India. He believes in the ultimate inevitability of class conflict, though he would avoid it if he could. I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized.’ ‘Discussion with Basil Mathews and others’, November 24 1936, (CWMG vol.64, 73)

69 ‘Personally I would want to change the heart of the Government also. That is why we are going into the Councils.’ ‘Speech at Gandhi Sewa Sangh Meeting’, Hudli-III, April 20 1937, CWMG vol.65: 119
went so far as to claim that he was worthless. To which Gandhi reacted sharply and asked Nehru for explanation. In his letter dated January 3, 1940, Nehru wrote to Gandhi, shielding his planning committee members who, according to him, had approached Kumarappa 'for certain information in regard to cottage industries and sought his co-operation on some other matters connected therewith. Kumarappa refused any kind of co-operation or help.' Gandhi replied immediately, on January 5, 1940. 'Your letter makes me sad. You said in indignant tones that Kumarappa was a worthless man. And this you did on the flimsiest testimony. My point is not that the interpretation was incorrect but that it was wrong to judge a co-worker on such hearsay.' Gandhi termed it 'ignorant or interested criticism' which did not influence him.

To BCRoy Gandhi wrote on October 12 1939, 'Jawaharlal is the only man with drive to take my place. Make therefore what use you can of me through him. I have hitherto influenced the country through the Committee. Now I must do so to the extent that I influence Jawaharlal.' In the same month, he wrote to Jawaharlal October 26 1939, 'differences in outlook between us are becoming most marked. Perhaps this is the most critical period in our history. I hold very strong views on the most important questions which occupy our attention. I know you too hold strong views on them but different from mine. Your mode of expression is different from mine. ...I feel that you should take full charge and lead the country, leaving me free to

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70 'Development Planning and the Indian State', Partha Chatterjee in Politics and the State in India edited by Zoya Hasan, Sage, 2000, pp.115-141

71 In his letter dated January 3, 1940, Jawaharlal had written: 'About Kumarappa’s correspondence with the Planning Committee, I was told by Ambalal and Dr. Nazir Ahmad that they had approached him for certain information in regard to cottage industries and sought his co-operation on some other matters connected therewith. Both of them were very much hurt at the reply received from Kumarappa which seemed to them to refuse any kind of co-operation or help.'

72 Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, January 5 1940, (CWMG vol.71, 77)

73 I know the possibility of misunderstandings. These and ignorant or interested criticism have never influenced me. I know that all would be well, if we are strong within. You have made more than ample amends about Kumarappa. Yes, we have very few workers like him.' Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', after January 5 1940, (CWMG vol.71, 78)

74 'Make therefore what use you can of me through him. I have hitherto influenced the country through the Committee. Now I must do so to the extent that I influence Jawaharlal. Don’t you agree?' 'Letter to BCRoy', October 12 1939, (CWMG vol.70, 248)

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voice my opinion. But if you all thought that I should observe complete silence, I should, I hope, find no difficulty in complying.\textsuperscript{75}

Despite its obvious association with the poor of land, Gandhi’s Khadi faced opposition from communist ideology as propagated by indigenous ideologues of the left. Shapurji Saklatwala, a communist MP, protested against Khadi by asserting that it was not a non-violent Khadi programme. His argument was that it killed the livelihood of Lancashire labour. Further, he saw that the Khadi disrupted labour unity and therefore the communist movement for a socialist state. ‘There is no unity in Khaddar. How can we attain unity by spinning in the corner of houses? Unity can be achieved by working together in factories.’\textsuperscript{76} It goes long way in demonstrating the level of tolerance and self-control that he possessed towards fulfillment of his purpose. The MP obviously did not see the unity that was being ‘brought about by Khaddar’, Gandhi replied simply. ‘Weavers, spinners and dyers, etc., are being united by Khadi.’ But Saklatwala seemed so smug in his own judgment that he proposed Gandhi’s quarantine ordering Gandhi to ‘Lead us as we tell you.’ It is pity that Saklatwala not only had meager knowledge of Khadi ideology but of Gandhi’s personality he knew even less as to presume such scenario ever being possible.

Economic resurgence of the villages necessarily brought in the question of socialism, then being hotly debated in the country. Gandhi’s position was unequivocal. ‘All land belongs to Gopal,’ he quoted, and added ‘Gopal… means the State, i.e., the people….Land and all property is his who will work it’. ‘Unfortunately,’ he added, ‘the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this fact’\textsuperscript{77}.

\textsuperscript{75} ‘I could see that though your affection and regard for me remain undiminished, differences in outlook between us are becoming most marked. I cannot move about. I cannot come in direct touch with the masses, not even with the Congress workers. I feel that I must not lead if I cannot carry you all with me.’ ‘Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru’, October 26 1939. (CWMG vol.70, 297)

\textsuperscript{76} Interview to Saklatwala, February 5 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 46)

\textsuperscript{77} Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: “All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of the line and he can therefore unmake it.” Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.’ ‘Speech at Exhibition Ground’, Faizpur, December 27 1936, (CWMG vol.64, 192)
Gandhi believed in the equality of labour and capital. Communism’s ‘Classless Society’ was an ideal...worth striving for’.

Gandhi thought that the programmes of the Socialist Party in Congress tended to ‘ignore Indian conditions’. He questioned the assumption of existing antagonism between ‘the classes and masses or between the labourers and the capitalist such that they can never work for mutual good’.

In July 1934, Gandhi stated that he would be ‘no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause’. His method was to reach the heart and convert so as to make the propertied class custodian of welfare of poor classes. It was to convert landed gentry to hold all their ‘private property in trust’ for tenants. Therefore the landed gentry must not squander the gains ‘in luxuriant and extravagant living’. Socialist party espoused ‘wholesale expropriation of the propertied classes’. Gandhi was working for ‘cooperation and coordination of capital and labour and of landlords and tenants’. ‘Class war’, Gandhi asserted, ‘is foreign to the essential genius of India which is capable of evolving a form of communism broad-based on the fundamental rights of all and equal justice to all. The Ramrajya of my dream ensures the rights alike of prince and pauper.’ Gandhi said he did

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78 'Discussion with a Roman Catholic Priest', March 5 1937, (CWMG vol.64, 423)

79 'I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress. But I can’t say that I like the programme as it appears in the printed pamphlet. It seems to me to ignore Indian conditions, and I do not like the assumption underlying many of its propositions which go to show that there is necessarily antagonism between the classes and the masses or between the labourers and the capitalists such that they can never work for mutual good. My own experience covering a fairly long period is to the contrary. What is necessary is that labourers or workers should know their rights and should also know how to assert them.' 'Observations on M R Masani’s Socialistic Programme', May 29 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 36.

80 'I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause. My object is to reach your hearts and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare. I have always told the mill-owners that they are not exclusive owners of the mills. Workmen are equal sharers in the ownership. In the same way, I would tell you that the ownership of your land belongs as much to the ryots as to you and you may not squander your gains in luxurious or extravagant living, but must use them for the wellbeing of the ryots. Once you make your ryots experience a sense of kinship with you and a sense of security that their interests as members of the family will never suffer at your hands, you may be sure that there cannot be a class war between you and them.' 'Answers to Zamindars', The Pioneer, July 25 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 248.
believe in the existence of class struggle. What, however, he did not believe in was the necessity of fomenting and keeping it up.81

As Gandhi wrote to Narendra Deva, his ‘enunciation of socialist object’ frightened him. In a letter to Deva, Gandhi wrote that the implications of socialist principles was ‘intoxicating’ but added, ‘I fear all intoxicants’. He would not even contemplate elimination of propertied class, extinction of private property, and violent redistribution of land to toiling masses. He agreed to the principle of to everyone ‘according to his needs’ although would have liked to prefix ‘just’ before ‘needs’. He found glaring omission of the constructive agenda in the socialist manifesto. ‘Khaddar’, Gandhi wrote, was a ‘symbol of identity with the masses’. Gandhi pleaded for ‘practical socialism’ that suited indigenous conditions rather than imported ‘scientific socialism’ that the programme was referred as.82

It is the ‘socialism of spinning wheel’ that is workable in Indian conditions. Spinning wheel was to be the centre in a village-workers’ concern. It was not yet sufficiently realized that hand spinning remained a supplementary industry of universal application and scope in India. Gandhi blamed his own living, as it was not a ‘true echo’ of the spinning wheel message, responsible for such a state of affair. ‘Today, the spinning-wheel has established itself in our economic life only to the extent that it is needed to minister to the clothing needs of the new class of khadi

81 ‘I entertain a growing belief that it is perfectly possible to avoid it. There is no virtue in fomenting it, as there is in preventing it. The conflict between moneyed classes and labourers is merely seeming. When labour is intelligent enough to organize itself and learns to act as one man, it will have the same weight as money if not much greater. The conflict is really between intelligence and unintelligence. Surely it will be folly to keep up such a conflict. Unintelligence must be removed.

‘Money has its use as much as labour. After all money is a token of exchange. The advantage, if any, will be with the one who has monopoly of labour. If both are even there will be harmony. The problem therefore is not to set class against class, but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity. Moneyed men after all form a microscopic minority in the world.

‘To inflame labour against moneyed men is to perpetuate class hatred and all the evil consequences flowing from it. The strife is a vicious circle to be avoided at any cost. It is an admission of weakness, a sign of inferiority complex. The moment labour recognizes its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, i.e., it will be held in trust for labour. For labour is more than money.’ Not Patchwork, Harijan, October 19 1935, (CWMG vol.62, 46)

82 ‘I think that it is wrong to call the party ‘Congress Socialist Party’ unless you apply for permission to make it part of the Congress organization. I miss in your draft constitution acceptance of the Congress objective of attainment of pura swaraj by legitimate and peaceful means. I draw your attention to glaring omissions: Khaddar as symbol of identity with the masses and immediate occupation till a better is found for the millions who are unemployed for six or four months in the year.’ Letter to Narendra Deva, August 2 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 275.
weavers that has sprung up during the past decade. But a large body like the Spinners' Association cannot justify its existence to fulfil that limited object. The idea at the back of khadi is that it is an industry supplementary to agriculture and co-extensive with it, that it is the life-breath of millions of Harijan weavers who derive their sustenance from it. The spinning-wheel cannot be said to have been established in its own proper place in our life, until we can banish idleness from our villages and make every village home a busy hive. Unemployment and idleness of millions must lead to bloody strife. Khadi is the only alternative to this and not the so-called socialism, which presupposes industrialism. The socialism that India can assimilate is the socialism of the spinning-wheel.83

As Gandhi faced socialist opposition he too became conscious of his weapon. Charkha was posited against sickle; non-violence was pitted against red-rebellion.

He seems to be blinded to situation surrounding him, oblivious of wind blowing in opposite direction and seems to exist in isolation. There was obvious failure in inoculating Congressmen of his faith in Charkha's all round capability in ridding India of her political, economic and communal problems. Congressmen had continued to believe that clothes manufactured in Indian mills were entitled to gain same patronage as Khadi was; in fact, mill manufacturers had greater entitlement as it was more cheaper and more durable. Gandhi's contention that cheapness of mill-manufactures was deceptive as Khadi with its comparative dearness catered to millions of poor people where as mills meant deprivation of employment fell on deaf ears. Gandhi still desired to turn Congress committees into 'a model laboratory and spinning and weaving institute for the organization of villages'. The economics of

83 'The village worker will thus be a living embodiment of industry. He will master all the processes of khadi, from cotton-sowing and picking to weaving, and will devote all his thought to perfecting them. If he treats it as a science, it won't jar on him, but he will derive fresh joy from it everyday, as he realizes more and more its great possibilities. If he will go to the village as a teacher, he will go there no less as a learner. He will soon find that he has much to learn from the simple villagers. He will enter into every detail of village life, he will discover the village handicrafts and investigate the possibilities of their growth and their improvement. He may find the villagers completely apathetic to the message of khadi, but he will, by his life of service compel interest and attention.' Discussion with Gujarat Vidyapith Teachers', After August 14 1934, CWMG vol. 58: 305.
Khadi required that all the processes from cultivation of cotton to the manufacture of Khadi and its consumption was to be gone through within the same locale. 84

Gandhi's main purpose in proposing congress acceptance of governance was to further the acceptance and implementation of constructive agenda. The constructive programme had led to the formation of the Congress Ministries in seven provinces. 85

Gandhi's point was that paltry and temporary relief from financial burden would not help the poor. Only constructive work could give the poor self-confidence, dignity, and the power of continuously bettering their own position. The most important constructive work was 'universal production and use of Khadi through universal hand-spinning'. The Congress Working Committee on the urgings of Gandhi emphasized the necessity for the elected Legislative members to take up the constructive work agenda among the electorates. 86 Congress Ministries had to soon resign their regime in protest against unilateral declaration of India's participation into war.

For about ten years Gandhi remained obscured from politics of the country, only intervening occasionally when he thought he could influence policies. All through he remained at Segaon working to develop 'rural mindedness'. The village uplift movement was an offshoot of the spinning movement. 87 He spurned Birla's offer to help financially undertake experimentation in rural uplift in more than one village that he was presently engaged in. It was not the money but mutual understanding between urban-workers (representing 'intellect') and rural communities (representing moribund 'manual') that would bring village reconstruction.

In these critical times Gandhi's influence over the Congress was a matter of private and public conjecture. His decade-long isolation at Segaon, his speeches which were more longer at GSS than at Congress session, his occasional rejoinders on contemporary political issues etc made his stature within the Congress hierarchy a

84 'Spinning Wheels vs Mills, Harijan', December 30 1939, (CWMG vol.71, 55)
85 'Speech at Educational Conference-I, October 22 1937,(CWMG vol.66, 264)
86 The Constructive Programme, Harijan, May 15 1937, (CWMG vol.65, 199)
87 Discussion with John R Mott, Harijan, December 19 1936, CWMG vol. 64, 38
matter of speculation. Some even went as far as to insinuate about his living itself. He was charged with cloaking his sensuality with claims of brahmacharya. It was his confessional writings that provided gist to mills. His practice of taking daily body-massage and medicated bath with the help of women inmates came under licentious gaze. The vilification had begun, Gandhi deduced, from the time he got involved with Harijan movement and got it associated with Congress programme infuriating some Sanatanists. They argued that his 'saintliness' was nothing but 'sinfulness'. Gandhi called them 'palpable lies'. But what had now begun just as a murmur would later assume a monstrous form. 88

The problem of purifying the Congress was a big one. 89 It was steeped into a phenomenon that Gandhi called 'Internal Decay'. It was turning into an undisciplined monolith. Instances of 'violence, untruth and corruption' in the Congress were of daily reportage. Power was causing indigestion in the body of Congress. Factional strife, members' indiscipline, electoral impersonation, roll tempering, and many other ills were becoming 'a common occurrence'. Bogus membership was rampant. There was 'open and scandalous corruption in enrolling Congress members'. Its factions were trying to capture the Congress. It exposed Congress claim to homogeneity in membership. Its constituents had no faith in constructive programme, especially Khadi. Such ideological in-fighting affected preparedness of Congress. Khadi clause was observed more in breach. 90 Gandhi himself admitted that the Clause had led to 'much falsehood and hypocrisy'. 91 Many disbelieved Gandhi's avowed espousal of link between Swaraj and Khadi. Gandhi wrote in his 'views' papers his opinion on the rapidly falling standards in Congress. But rarely someone pay hid to it. In his

88 'The charges, to my knowledge, began with my active campaign against untouchability. This was when it was included in the Congress programme and I began to address crowds on the subject and insisted on having Harijans at meetings and in the Ashram. It was then that some sanatanists, who used to help me and befriend me, broke with me and began a campaign of vilification.' 'My Life', Harijan, October 30 1939, CWMG vol.70: 313

89 Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, CWMG vol. 58: 339.

90 'I have letters complaining that the khadi clause of the Congress Constitution is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The correspondents' chief complaint is that, in selecting Congress candidates for municipalities and local boards, the Congress officials do not enforce the khadi clause. One correspondent says that the obligation to wear khadi is waived because the Congress officials do not find competent enough candidates among khadi-wearers.' 'Notes: The Congress and Khadi', Harijan, January 22 1940, CWMG vol.68, 124.

91 'Am I all Powerful?', Harijan, August 12 1939, CWMG vol. 70: 65-7.
prognosis, Gandhi wrote, 'If the Congress is not purged of illegalities and irregularities, it will cease to be the power it is today and will fail to fulfill expectations when the real struggle faces the country.'

Violent speeches were becoming order of the day. A disillusioned Gandhi publicly admitted his inability to lead such 'an army of civil resisters' if he was called on. In such situation, he saw only 'anarchy and red-ruin in front of the country'. But to many this 'harsh truth' was not at all visible. Subhas Bose was one of them who attempted to force Gandhi on the war-path. For him corruption in Congress was manageable and not alarming enough to warrant deferring of the launch of the movement. Gandhi did not agree with this interpretation. Congress, Gandhi said, needed to be strengthened and purified 'so as to make it an effective vehicle for launching nation-wide Satyagraha'. Gandhi was 'decidedly against his re-election' at Tripuri which Subhas won defeating Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi's sponsored candidate. Gandhi rejoiced in his defeat and said, 'I am nothing if I do not represent definite principles and policy.' Subhash's was an open defiance. He had come to believe what Sanketwala had just insinuated jocularly that Gandhi could be imprisoned by new-ideologues and his appeal could be jockeyed to fulfill ambitions contrary to that of Gandhi.

Schism became so obvious after Subhas' reelection that the AICC had to reiterate its adherence to old policy and leadership. A resolution adopted by the AICC at Tripuri read: 'The Committee declares its firm adherence to the fundamental

92 'Besides impersonation there is the wholesale tampering with the Congress registers which contain bogus names. These registers have as much value as a box containing counterfeit coins though it is claimed to contain rupees. Strife at Congress elections is becoming a common occurrence. The indiscipline of Congressmen is on the increase everywhere. Many of them make irresponsible, even violent, speeches. Many fail to carry out instructions.' 'Internal Decay', Harijan, January 28 1939, CWMG vol.68: 320-1

93 'The Congress has ceased to be an effective vehicle for launching nation-wide satyagraha. It has become unwieldy, it has corruption in it, there is indiscipline among Congressmen, and rival groups have come into being which would radically change the Congress programme if they could secure a majority. That they have failed hitherto to secure it is no comfort to me. The majority has no living faith in its own programme. In any case satyagraha through a majority is not a feasible proposition. The whole weight of the Congress should be behind any nation-wide satyagraha.' 'Its Implication', Harijan, June 24 1939, CWMG vol.69: 361

94 'Subhas Babu, instead of being President on the sufferance of those whom he calls rightists, is now President elected in a contested election. This enables him to choose a homogeneous cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance.' 'Statement to the Press', January 31 1939, CWMG vol.68, 359
policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future.95 In August 1939, Subhas was disqualified from Congress for the period of three years.96 'I dissent from you', Gandhi wrote to Subhas on November 1939. 'Your way is not mine. For the time being you are my lost sheep. Some day I shall find you returning to the fold, if I am right and my love is pure.'97 Subhas too openly claimed his difference from the Mahatma.98

Subhas' expulsion was no show of Gandhi's power. His words had begun to fall in the wilderness. His plea were pathetic repetition of phrases told umpteen times since 1920 and now it were falling on the deaf ears. It no longer enthused any of the Congressmembers. On the new crop of leadership his influence was limited. The ideological divergence had drawn a wedge between him and them. Socialism and

95 The resolution, sponsored by Govind Ballabh Pant in the Subjects Committee at the Tripuri Congress, read: 'In view of various misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversies in connection with the Presidential election and after, it is desirable that the all-India Congress Committee should clarify the position and declare its general policy. The Committee declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. The Committee expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members. In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the Committee regards it as imperative that the congress executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.' 'Letter to Subhas Chandra Bose', March 24 1939, CWMG vol.69: 80 fn.

96 The Working Committee has come to the painful conclusion that it will fail in its duty if it condones the deliberate and flagrant breach of discipline by Subhas Babu. The Working Committee therefore resolves that for his grave act of indiscipline Shri Subhas Babu is declared disqualified as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939. Congress Working Committee resolution, August 11 1939, CWMG vol.70, 84

97 'I confess that your letter has appeared to me to be a challenge. You have evidently no confidence in the Working Committee. You regard its ban on you as a vendetta. As you know, I am party to the ban which was voted unanimously. As to action by the Working Committee, I dissent from you. Your way is not mine. For the time being you are my lost sheep. Some day I shall find you returning to the fold, if I am right and my love is pure.' 'Letter to Subhas Chandra Bose'. November 23 1939, CWMG vol.70, 374

98 Speaking on 'The Fundamental problems of India' in an address given to faculty and students of Tokyo University in November 1944, Subhas Bose said: 'In Gandhi there are two aspects—Gandhi as a political leader and Gandhi as a philosopher. We have been following him in his capacity as a political leader, but we have not accepted his philosophy.' The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Edited by Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p316.
communism, that the new crop of young leaders propagated, were making inroads and Gandhi's ideas were seen as anachronism. These young leaders had no compunction in taking financial help from Birla through Gandhi for their family's uplift and yet accused Gandhi of being influenced by capitalists. In showing allegiance to his ideology they were least reverent if not hostile. Jayaprakash, the leader of the new crop, was one of them. Gandhi negotiated his monthly pay-packet from Birla. Jayaprakash also kept a link with Gandhi through his wife, Prabhawati, whose father, Brijkishore, was first to bring Gandhi to Champaran in 1918. Subhash was another. In his regime, National Planning Committee was instituted of which Gandhi was kept in complete dark.\(^9\) Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal seeking 'light'.\(^{10}\) It is telling of priorities that when Nehru organized National Planning Committee to invent an industrialized India, Gandhi took to rural education and occupation-based economic activities. In Gandhi's conception any national planning that ignored the availability of labour wealth was misplaced.\(^{11}\) 'My views on national planning differ from the prevailing ones. I do not

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\(^9\) In a chapter titled, 'The role of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian History' in his book 'The Indian Struggle' published in 1935, Subhas Bose analyzed Gandhi's role. 'The success of the Mahatma has been due to the failure of constitutionalism on the one side and armed revolution on the other. In 1920 India stood at the crossroads. Constitutionalism was dead; armed revolution was sheer madness. The country was groping for a new method and looking for a new leader. Moreover, the time was auspicious and his policy prudent. Though he appeared as a dynamic force, he was not too revolutionary for the majority of his countrymen. If he had been so, he would have frightened them, instead of inspiring them; repelled them, instead of drawing them. His policy was one of unification. He wanted to unite Hindu and Moslem; the high caste and the low caste; the capitalist and the labourer; the landlord and the peasant. By his humanitarian outlook and his freedom from hatred, he was able to arouse sympathy even in his enemy's camp ... the Mahatma's popularity and reputation does not depend on his political leadership—but largely on his character.

'The question we have to consider, however, is whether the Mahatma will continue his political activities or whether he will voluntarily withdraw himself from active politics and devote himself exclusively to social and humanitarian work. We have had experience of the Mahatma's retirement from active politics once before—from 1924 to 1928.' The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Edited by Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997.

\(^{10}\) I have never been able to understand or appreciate the labours of the Committee. I do not know that it is working within the four corners of the resolution creating the Committee. I do not know that the Working Committee is being kept informed of its doings. I have not understood the purpose of the numerous sub-committees. It has appeared to me that much money and labour are being wasted on an effort which will bring forth little or no fruit. These are my doubts. I seek light. 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, August 11 1939, CWMG vol.70, 86

\(^{11}\) '... we would need Rs. 300 crores of capital employing 33 lakhs of people if we supplied all our requirements by mill production, while we would require about Rs. 72 crores of investment employing 800 lakhs of people if our supply were to come from cottage units. The two methods have their undoubted advantages. ... We are poor but we have an ocean of labour wealth. Therefore an intelligent plan will find the cottage method fit into the scheme for our country. ... Any planning in our country that ignores the absorption of labour wealth will be misplaced. Our analysis has shown that centralized method of production, whatever may be its capacity to produce, is incapable of finding employment for as large a number of persons as we have to provide for. Therefore it stands condemned in this country.' 'Mills vs. Charkha', Harijan, August 12 1939, CWMG vol.70, 74
want it along industrial lines. I want to prevent our villages from catching the infection of industrialization.' Nehru wanted a socialized industrialism. Gandhi's own view was 'evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them.'

In Gandhi's own assessment, even while Congress was pledged to winning freedom of India through non-violence, it had largely remained 'a debating society, offering civil-disobedience at intervals and all the time only playing with its vital programme of construction.' He had as yet failed in making Congressmen spin. 'At one time every Congressman was...to spin. But the clause about spinning was dropped...' Now Gandhi desired conversion of Congress into a Peace organization and Congressman, 'a soldier of peace'. 'A soldier of peace, unlike the one of the sword, has to give all his spare time to the promotion of peace alike in war time as in peace time. His work in peace time is both a measure of prevention of, as also that of preparation for, war time.'

During the war, Gandhi thought and spoke of end of 'age of cities' and revival of slogan of 'Back to the villages'. Strange as it may appear, I suggest that ceaseless occupation in constructive programme is the best preparation to face danger. For it means concentration in villages of the city people and their being occupied and occupying the villagers in productive and educative work. The psychological moment for the new programme had arrived with the outbreak of the war. 'Back to the villages!' had become a necessity from every point of view. Now is the time to decentralize production and distribution. Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work.

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102 Interview to Francis G. Hickman, Harijan, September 29, 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 27-30)
103 'A soldier of peace, unlike the one of the sword, has to give all his spare time to the promotion of peace alike in war time as in peace time. His work in peace time is both a measure of prevention of, as also that of preparation for, war time.' 'Peace Organization', Harijan, January 18, 1942, (CWMG vol.75, 211)
104 'It needs no argument today to prove that the charkha is linked with ahimsa and therefore with swaraj. Congress soldiers should not forget that their chief weapon is the charkha and spinning regularly is their 'military' discipline. The charkha and all it means is the only thing that will enable us to live and make us stand in honour and self-respect.' 'Speech at Khadi Vidyalaya', Bardoli, January 8, 1942, (CWMG vol.75, 203)
105 'Strange as it may appear, I suggest that ceaseless occupation in constructive programme is the best preparation to face danger. For it means concentration in villages of the city people and their being occupied and occupying the villagers in productive and educative work.' 'Statement to the Press', January 7, 1942, CWMG vol.75, 201.
106 'The Congress will cease to be popular, if it cannot deserve popularity in times of stress. If it cannot provide work for the workless and hungry, if it cannot protect the people from depredations or teach them how to face them, if it cannot help
As violence in all its variations encircled Gandhi, he increasingly advocated Charkha as a symbol of non-violence. 'The spinning wheel is a symbol of non-violence for me. The wheel as such is lifeless, but when I invest it with symbolism it becomes a living thing for me.' In December 1941, surrounded by gory violence raging internally as well as externally, Gandhi laid out the meaning and place of his constructive work programme. Communal Unity headed the list and yet, he called Khadi the most controversial of thirteen sub-heads. In its symbolic connotation, Khadi was ‘decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life’. Greater the decentralization of labour, the simpler and cheaper the tools. Gandhi emphasized dhanush takli as it was easily made, cheaper, required rare repairs. ‘The best, easiest and cheapest way is to make it oneself.’

It was Gandhi’s ambition to build a band of non-violent soldiers. A nation engaged in the emergency of violent war had the right to conscript its adult population for military service. Gandhi, waging a non-violent war, desired conscription of all for ‘productive national service’. But it was not be compulsory; conscription was through individual conviction rather than compulsion. It was contemplated that Congress-members would undertake at least half-an-hour’s spinning daily. Not the military training, but, as Gandhi argued, peaceful engagement with a productive occupation was the sufficient condition for waging the non-violent war. It was simply a withdrawal into private space, with each individual producing to meet one’s immediate requirement. In such private space, there were no vital installments worth conquering. 'A country whose culture is based on non-violence will find it necessary to have every home as much self-contained as possible.' Indian village organization, 'congeries of republics', was constituted so as to remain undisturbed by the periodical visitations from barbarous hordes. Cities are an invitation to invasion.

As Gandhi’s immediate environment produced more of violence, more he saw in Charkha a symbolic value of non-violence, more he became determined to apply non-violence on still larger scale. It was his conviction that non-violence on mass scale could only be applied by making people ‘usefully and knowingly occupied for them in the face of danger, it will lose its prestige and popularity. No person or corporation can live long on his or its capital. The latter has to circulate and multiply itself.’ Peace Organization’, Harijan, January 18 1942, (CWMG vol.75, 211)

107 ‘Speech at Meeting of Gandhi Seva Sangh and Charkha Sangh’, Harijan, July 21 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 191)
the sake of the country'. It was hand spinning and its anterior processes that fulfilled the required criteria for such an occupation. Not just the capital required was nominal; it was thought to soothe the nervous system. It was indigenous to India's tradition. Khadi therefore was a non-violent programme. It was a scale on which India's adherence to the creed of non-violence could be measured. Khadi's tardy growth was indicative of Congress' and country's 'half-hearted' belief in non-violence. 'I plead for full-hearted belief in both'. Gandhi saw Khadi programme as a means towards voluntary co-operation on a scale never witnessed anywhere in modern times.\(^{108}\)

It was however soon decided that the Congress did not agree with Gandhi's definition of non-violence. The Congress Working Committee decided that they were 'unable to go the full length with Gandhiji' on the question of non-violence. It left Gandhi free to 'pursue his great ideal in his way', absolving him from responsibility for the programme and activity which Congress would pursue in league with real politic.\(^{109}\) Congress argued adopting a path contrary to Gandhi's in dealing with external aggression and internal disorder. Rajagopalchari said Congress was a political organization not working for non-violence but for the political ideal. He rejected the idea that non-violence could ever win India's freedom. Gandhi, he said, was impaired in his judgment due to 'too much brooding on ahimsa'.\(^{110}\) Gandhi's insistence, Nehru said, incapacitated the functioning of Congress. Gandhi insisted 'that it is possible to touch power through non-violence'.\(^{111}\) Unlike earlier times, it was rebellion from close coterie. Schism between Gandhi and Congress eventually

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\(^{108}\) 'What it Means', Harijan, December 9 1939, (CWMG vol.71, 4)

\(^{109}\) The resolution of the Working committee, passed after five days of deliberations, inter alia said: "While the Working committee hold that the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in their struggle for independence, the Committee cannot ignore the present imperfections and failings in this respect of the human elements they have to deal with . . . The Committee have deliberated over the problem that has thus arisen and have come to the conclusion that they are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji. But they recognize that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way, and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India and the world in regard to external aggression and internal disorder." fn, 'Both happy and unhappy', Harijan, June 29 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 194-7)

\(^{110}\) The resolution, passed on July 7, called for "acknowledgment by Great Britain of the complete independence of India" and as an immediate step in giving effect to it, the constitution at the centre of a provisional National Government. It declared that "if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of the Defence of the country." 'The Delhi Resolution', Harijan, July 13 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 255)

\(^{111}\) 'Discussion at Congress working committee Meeting', April 15/19 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 235)
came to fore. In its earlier occurrence, Gandhi took initiatives to subside the differences by unilaterally withdrawing from the Congress. But, now, the ideological difference was widely pronounced. Gandhi was being seen retrogressive and idealistic. If his views on industrialism hampered India’s emergence as a modern nation, his creed of non-violence held up India’s march to freedom. Formation of Planning Committee with focus on engineering India’s industrialization was a rebuff to Gandhi’s Khadi and programme for village reinvigoration. His ultimate isolation was now proved by Congress’ resolution which showed that its adherence to non-violence was mere tactical or as Gandhi would say, a non-violence of weak. Gandhi asked for resolute demonstration of non-violence through adoption of Charkha. He received ultimatum to mend or end his association with Congress. But the ultimatum was written by people ‘whom he would not disown and who could not do without him’.

In 1940, Gandhi was blaming Congress failure to live up to the constructive work agenda as reason for India’s continued subjugation. Adherence to triple programme of communal unity, untouchability eradication, and Khadi would have produced an irresistible momentum for Independence. The blame lay squarely on the doorstep of Congress if India had not yet won her freedom. Congressmen and women did not believe that the constructive agenda was non-violence in action, that it was the launching pad of civil-disobedience. It was because Congress’ non-violence was a ‘non-violent conduct born of impotence’. ‘Hitherto Congressmen have played with Khadi. They have not believed in its message. They have used it often unwillingly, for mere show. It must become reality if true non violence is to permeate us.’ It was a farcical display of one's belief when for the last twenty years Charkha was put on the national flag as not many believed in its efficacy, in it being a symbol of voluntary cooperation, of identification with the poorest in the land, of non-violence social and economic organization.\textsuperscript{112}

As the communal violence increased in its ferocity, Gandhi reiterated communal harmony and reinstatement of Charkha in every individual home being centre to his politics. Greater the decentralization in economic and political order,
lesser the threat of invasion. The economics of Khadi required that from cultivation of cotton to the manufacture of Khadi and its disposal all the processes was to be carried out in the same village or centre. In Gandhi's conception, all Congress organizations were to transform into efficient spinning and weaving schools. 'Every Congress office should become a model laboratory and spinning and weaving institute for the organization of villages.' Every Congressmen was to become a master spinner and master weaver. He was to be able to teach and guide the poor villagers. He was to be a Khadi technician. He was to do sacrificial spinning in the service of the country. He had to believe that indigenous textile mills could safely be replaced by the Charkha and the handloom. The experience and knowledge accumulated, since the inception of AISA, was to facilitate in the conversion of Congress committees into spinning and weaving depots.113

Even when Congress made a pretension of putting aside Gandhi's agenda of non-violence in order to receive independence in lieu of its war-support to the British, it yielded meager results. Gandhi was brought back as the General of a confused army. He, with his Individual satyagraha, added to confusion.114 The movement, launched with much idealistic fanfare, petered out without much effect on the morals of British. As Gandhi had written to Viceroy Linlithgow, launching of some movement had become an existential imperative for the Congress. Its self-imposed restraint owing to British engagement in war could lead to self-extinction.115 Individual Satyagraha was a survival strategy, a mock display of Satyagraha, as much to people of India as to British rulers. But, alas, none were impressed. Vinoba was chosen to be first Satyagrahi as he had no rival in all India in perfect spinning. He was an epitome of Gandhi's constructive worker. Charkha, for him, was the most 'suitable outward symbol of non-violence'. In his introductory note on the eve of launching of Satyagraha, Gandhi wrote of Vinoba as one who believed that 'real independence of the

113 'Spinning-Wheels v. Mills', Harijan, December 30 1939, (CWMG vol.71, 55)

114 'The plan is simply this. Direct action will be commenced by Shri Vinoba Bhave and for the time being confined to him only. And since it is to be confined to individual civil disobedience and that too of him only, it will be so conducted by him as to exclude others directly or indirectly. But since it is concerned with freedom of speech, the public will be involved to an extent.' 'Civil Disobedience', Harijan, October 20 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 102-7)

115 'All India Congress Committee Resolution', September 15 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 1-3)
villagers is impossible without the constructive programme of which khadi is the centre.'\textsuperscript{116} It was a Satyagraha that drew its strength from the quality rather than quantity of participation. Gandhi would not invite any one who did not believe in spinning and khaddar as visible emblems of non-violence.'\textsuperscript{117} Indian opposition to the war effort expressed itself in the slogan—Na ek bhai na ek pie—not a single recruit nor a single pie. Individuals offered Satyagraha by advising others to not to help the British war effort in any way and courting imprisonment for doing so. Most important fallout of the movement was suspension publication of Gandhi's journals, tri-lingual Harijan.\textsuperscript{118}

Gandhi was reluctant to announce civil disobedience till the country's environment became conducive. 'I am mad after Khadi. My standard of success is Khadi, and unless it is achieved, I cannot venture to launch a civil disobedience movement.'\textsuperscript{119}

Gandhi would not launch civil disobedience movement against the Raj as its beholders, the British, themselves were fighting for their survival against Hitler’s onslaught. In these years, Gandhi insisted that the Congress must earnestly and loyally take up the Khadi programme before he would lead the country to open struggle of satyagraha against the Government. He resisted all pressures and even resorted to extreme measures as suspension of Bose from Congress owing to difference in method. He would wait till the country got 'demonstratively non-violent and

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\item \textsuperscript{116} 'Shri Vinoba has produced a text-book taking spinning as the handicraft. It is original in conception. He has made scoffers realize that spinning is the handicraft par excellence which lends itself to being effectively used for basic education. He has revolutionized taki-spinning and drawn out its hitherto unknown possibilities. For perfect spinning probably he has no rival in all India.' 'Civil Disobedience', October 20 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 104)
\item \textsuperscript{117} 'Every imprisonment in individual civil disobedience is a complete step in itself. The plan this time is not to have a continuous stream of resisters. Those who hug untouchability and regard communal unity as impossible or who believe neither in the charkha nor in the other village industries and, therefore, in the regeneration of the six hundred thousand villages—for such Mr. Vinoba is of no use. In their estimation he must be a hindrance to the political, economic and social advance of India.' 'Statement to the Press', October 21 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 118)
\item \textsuperscript{118} 'I have no course left open but to suspend publication of Harijan, Harijanbandhu and Harijan Sevak. I cannot function freely if I have to send to the Press Adviser at New Delhi every line I write about satyagraha. It is true that the notice is only advisory, and that therefore I am not bound to act up to it. But the consequence of disregard of advice is also stated in the notice. I have no desire to risk a prosecution against the Editors. The three weeklies have been conducted in the interest of truth and therefore of all parties concerned. But I cannot serve that interest if the editing has to be done under threat of prosecution. Liberty of the Press is a dear privilege, apart from the advisability or otherwise of civil disobedience.' 'Statement to the Press', October 24 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 124-6)
\item \textsuperscript{119} 'Message to Jabalpur District Political Conference', The Hindu, December 12 1939, (CWMG vol.71, 20)
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disciplined'. He would not allow erosion of 'great moral prestige of the Congress' by resorting to civil disobedience at this historical juncture that may embarrass the embattled British. He had many a questions: 'Have we got the power? Is India at ease without having up-to-date arms? Does not India feel helpless without the ability to defend herself against aggression? Do even Congressmen feel secure? Or do they not feel that for some years to come at any rate India will have to be helped by Britain or some other Power? If such is our unfortunate plight, how can we hope to make an effective contribution towards an honourable peace after the war or universal disarmament?' India need to demonstrate the non-violence of strong and be peaceful when her tormentor is in trouble. In Gandhi's conception of Satyagraha, civil-disobedience was simultaneous action of prison-going and constructive work. It was for this reason that he would heighten the pitch for Khadi every time the specter of struggle loomed large over the Indian political firmament. 'Those, therefore, who wish to see India realize her destiny through non-violence should devote every ounce of their energy towards the fulfillment of the constructive programme in right earnest without any thought of civil disobedience.' With each passing day, he more passionately argued for Charkha and its non-violence ideology. With each passing day his attack on Congress for being 'half-hearted' to Khadi and non-violence also became more passionate. He pleaded hard with Congress: 'If you have faith in non-violence of the strong, now is the time to act up to it.' This terrible, suicidal war may perhaps show that Khadi, i.e., the principle of self-reliance for meeting one's needs, is of universal application.

Even before the 'Quit India' call reverberated beyond the maidan in Bombay, the government arrested and put behind the bars all the Indian political leaders.

120 'I would unhesitatingly declare civil disobedience if the country was demonstrably non-violent and disciplined. But unfortunately we have many groups outside the Congress who believe in neither non-violence nor civil disobedience. In the Congress itself there are all shades of opinion about the efficacy of non-violence.' 'Not Yet', Harijan, June 1 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 103-5)

121 'But the members of the Working Committee felt that Congressmen would not be able to act up to it.' 'Both happy and unhappy', Harijan, June 29 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 194-7)

122 'The scope for khadi is as wide, at least, as the boundaries of India. This terrible, suicidal war may perhaps show that Khadi, i.e., the principle of self-reliance for meeting one's needs, is of universal application. Be that as it may, for India, at any rate, the spinning-wheel is the sole means of ending simultaneously both poverty and unemployment.' Rentia Baras', July 1 1941, (CWMG vol.74, 136)
While in Aga Khan detention camp, Gandhi refused to confine his letters to 'about personal and domestic matters', as per government's decree. He asked permission to continue his supervision of his multifarious concerns. In a letter to Secretary, Home Department, Government of Bombay, Gandhi wrote, 'These have no connection with politics which are the least part of my activities. I am directing the affairs of the A.I.S.A. and kindred associations... of a social, educational and humanitarian character.'

In early September 1946 an Interim National Government was formed. The Ministers met Gandhi in the Bhangi Colony where he was then putting up. The appointed day being his day of silence, he scribbled a brief-bald message for them. It ran: 'You have been in my thoughts since the prayer. Take to Khadi.'

This was the year of confessions and introspection. On September 1, 1944 AISA met at Sevagram, presided over by Gandhi himself. The AISA was meeting after the gap of more than two years. The world was still engrossed in the dangerous game of warfare, which had begun in the winter of 1939. India herself had undergone the upheaval of the last of the national struggle, the 'Quit India' movement. 'It seemed as though one age had succeeded another, bringing in the process trouble for whole of India. How could the Charkha Sangh have escaped it?'

The preceding National Struggle had taken a heavy toll. A large amount of the AISA property had either been destroyed or was in Government custody. Many of its workers, having taken part in the 'Quit India' movement, now languished in the jail. The scar caused by the government action daunted Gandhi. He discovered that the 'foundation of the AISA was so weak that the Association could be easily wiped out of existence'. The years of work had not made it take root in the life of the people. The Government could destroy it by imprisoning its leaders. On the other hand Marxian ideas had gripped the country. The literature on the subject abounded. The educated were veering towards it.

Thus, was introduced what came to be known as Charkha Sangh ka Navasamskaran - the reorientation in the work of AISA. On the basis of experience of

123 'I should be able to receive letters about these activities and write about them.' 'Letter to Secretary, Home Department', Government of Bombay, August 27 1942, (CWMG vol.76, 412)
124 The Last Phase, p6
a decade of khadi work 1935-44, during which wages for spinners were fixed in terms of the objective of a living wage, value of sales of khadi rose to Rs.1 crore (CWMG vol. partly due to rise in price following fixation of spinners wages). The demand for khadi developed due to patriotic fervour and due to cloth shortage in the earlier years of the war. The work of AISA, suffered some disruption due to the political arrests of its workers, Gandhi reviewed the khadi situation with considerable dissatisfaction over some of the emerging trends. In his talks and discussions with the Trustees of AISA, at Sevagram in 1944, he measured khadi work against the objective of reaching seven hundred thousand villages and found that very little had been achieved. Although khadi was sold in the cities and work was thereby provided to villagers, it had not become acceptable in the villages where the spinners hardly spun for their own use. In the re-oriented approach to khadi Gandhi expounded, four aspects were intensively focused on: first, all efforts were to be directed towards self-sufficiency, i.e., towards spinning for one’s own consumption; second, self-sufficiency was to be interpreted so as to allow scope for some production for sale so long as the sale was in the nearby village or district or at most the province; third, khadi, was not to be viewed as an occupation or craft merely to earn a living but as a means for uplifting the villages and thereby generating in the people spontaneous strength for swaraj; and fourth, the objective was to rejuvenate the village life as a whole and this could not be done by khadi alone but through a rehabilitation of agriculture, cattle breeding and all other village industries.

Khadi was never meant merely for the townspeople... The defect in the existing development, good though it appeared, was that it was not good enough for the villagers who spun yarn and wove khadi but did not use it themselves. They neither understood nor appreciated the dignity and value that its use carried. The fault was not theirs. The workers themselves did not understand. The town dwellers had to wear khadi and do the penance. They were willing to buy penance for a few extra rupees which they could easily spare and be called patriots in the bargain. But how could the Charkha Sangh belie its faith by ignoring the very foundation of khadi?

Gandhi emphasised that mere pursuit of the social objective of providing employment to the people or the economic objective of producing khadi for sale was not the core of the khadi programme. Khadi, according to him, could begin 'to have permanent effect only when carried out as part and parcel of the wider programme of non-violent village uplift or village reconstruction.' 'Today', he stated, 'our main concerned should be to lay the foundation for this [khadi] work as deep as possible

and not merely be satisfied with the production of khadi and sale of khadi itself.' The cardinal point in the above approach was to build up self reliance among the rural people. To achieve this wider objective, Gandhi presented a draft of the proposal which contained following points.

1. The village is the centre for the charkha, and the Charkha Sangh can realise its highest ambitions only when its work is decentralised in the villages.

2. The largest number of workers whose one passion is the charkha and whom the AISA approves should go to the villages.

3. The sales-depots and production-centres should be curtailed.

4. Training institutions should be developed and teaching courses enlarged.

5. The Sangh should permit any province or district which wants to be independent and self-sufficient to become so.

6. A standing Committee composed of the members of the AISA, AIVIA and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh should be formed in order to issue necessary directions in the light of the new ideology.

The task assigned to the three institutions was to achieve perfect non violence. The three institutions was to be so equipped that entire government machinery would depend upon them and not the vice versa. This would save the AISA from being reduced to a mere philanthropic institution.

'We plied the Charkha', Gandhi complained in the convention, 'but mechanically, not intelligently.' The workers had not fully adopted the non-violent outlook. Gandhi had thought of disbanding the AISA and distributing its property and funds among the people. Khadi was the epitome of non-violent self-sufficient economy.

If you agree with me you would wind up the AISA and distribute all its property and assets among its workers for carrying on the work. The Sangh need not keep even a pice for future activities. All of us should be convinced that the charkha is the symbol of non-violent economic self-sufficiency. If we and the people grasp this significance of the charkha not a pice need be spent on propaganda for the charkha. There would then be no reason to fear Government ordinances either. Nor need we look to the rich for alms. We shall without effort become the centre of hope, and people will come to us of their own accord. They will not go elsewhere to seek work. Every village will become the nerve centre of Independent India... This is the real function of the Sangh. We have to live and die for it.