Chapter Seven

Conclusion
"The Charkha is inefficient and uneconomic as a full time implement of manufacture. The late Mahatma Gandhi discovered mystical qualities in the art of hand spinning which raised it above yarn manufacture on power spinning machinery. ...its effect was political, but nothing to speak of in national production as such. It shamed people into boycotting British imports before the war, and provided a badge for the revolutionary. Today, Khaddar cloth is a drain on the government budget and a mark of the professional politician or his servant.\(^1\) It was the summery rejection of Khadi by one of the most innovative and unconventional of historians of modern India. Kosambi advocated handloom which then was a 'valuable aid to India's export drive'. The handloom meant hand-weaving of mill spun yarn in place of hand-spun yarn. The viability of handloom was repeatedly negated by Gandhi during the course of movement. He had said that weaving never was and could never become an occupation for majority of population. Weaving was full time, caste-based, and skill-driven occupation that required space, capital and assured supply of mill yarn. Spinning on other hand was a casteless vocation and could be undertaken by all irrespective of age, gender or ability. It required little investment, prior skill, or space. It made village artisans dependent on each other in place of impersonal relationship facilitated by market. These arguments were very much there since the movement was launched and it is not possible that Kosambi would not have heard of them. Yet, vilification continued and instead of complementing the effort, the movement was continuously derided by every section of intelligentsia. Biggest irony of Khadi movement is the fact that despite his aggressive campaign to recruit intelligentsia into his programme Gandhi not just failed in bringing them in but faced a barrage of criticism from them. That is one practical side assessment of the movement.

Secondly, Khadi disastrously fell short of its designed ambition. It did not win India her freedom, neither Swaraj was won for India's famished millions. Instead, Khadi, immediately after Gandhi's assassination, got stiffened into an establishment, receiving government patronage by becoming one of its myriad of departments. Not that such a course was not visualized by Gandhi himself. In fact, he himself repeatedly demanded governmental patronage and protection to his Khadi enterprise,

\(^1\) Kosambi, DD, 'Problems of Science and technology in Under-developed countries', in Science, Society and Peace, 1996, PPH, p35.
more so, when Congress formed provincial governments in 1937. Gandhi during those two years of Congress governments in provinces demanded instituting of separate departments for Khadi and village industries. So, nobody could really accuse Nehru of betraying Gandhi's Khadi. Yet, it was during his tenure that Khadi became the dumping ground for inconvenient politicians. Its chairmen came to be political appointees who were shunted out of mainstream power battles when they raised too many questions on Nehru's 'un-Gandhian' economic policies.²

² Most of the appointees were reluctant to accept the job as they were aware of its secondary importance on the power turf. Some retiring politicians were appointed as the position was seen as post-retirement sop with built-in leverage of patronage. Some like Vaikunthbhai Mehta, the first Chairman, were appointed to ward off political threat to the power that were. Otherwise, most with few exceptions, were appointees who had outlived their political utility. Till before Mahesh Sharma, one who specifically asked for the job because of his interest and prior involvement, the KVIC have had ten successive Chairmen. They were men of varied characterisation; if Vaikunthbhai Mehta (1953-63) was to be christened as Father of the Co-operatives Movement, then Deberbah (1963-71) was an institution builder who crystallised the structure of the KVIC. With Deberbah ended an era of political inputs into Khadi development. Its philosophical growth became stunted, never to achieve again any of its past glory. Khadi was biggest casualty of Indira Gandhi's ascendance to power. In the battle of wits between the syndicate and her it was Khadi which lost the political patronage that it so strongly had in Nehru era. Most of the members of the syndicate belonged to Khadi generation. As they made an exit fro the portals of power, Khadi too eclipsed from political pedestal and became something to be soldiered on rather than soldiering the responsibility. It was most ironical finale of Gandhi's Khadi. Indira Gandhi soon played a devastating mother to Khadi organizations on her return to power in 1980s by constituting Kudal Commission to investigate their functioning and financing. She perceived their role in her defeat. The third Chairman, G Ramachandran's (1971-74) only credentials, it is said in the informed circles, was that he had received Mahatma's attention to his queries on machine and technology. A student with exceptional intelligence, Ramachandran lived with Gandhi for some time at Sewagram. Ghanshyam Ojha's (1974-5) was a short tenure without any authority on Khadi. A M Thomas (1975-77, 1980-86) was a product of Indira Gandhi's politics of appointing insecure people who shall be loyal to none, ideology included, but her alone. His was one of the longest tenure of nine years. Although blamed for ad-hocism in polices, he was generally regarded as an able administrator. His tenure was particularly marked for parochial policies as his prime focus came to rest upon Cochin-centred development. Dislodged by Janta Government, which appointed Som Dutt (1977-80), Thomas staged a come back in 1980, with the return of Indira Gandhi. Som Dutt, who had squeezed in between the double tenures of Thomas, was doyen of post-independence Khadi and was based in Panipat till his very recent death. A disciple of J B Kirpalani, he was with in Khadi since partition when he worked to provide relief to refugees through Khadi works. From 1986-88, Rajiv Gandhi had not enough time to find a full time Chairman, enabling his Minister of State for Industries to take charge. The Rajiv Gandhi found his Man-Friday in Laxmi Das, a comparatively young person for anointing. The tenure of Chairmanship too was increased from three to five years. But luck would not be his as following tradition he resigned in the wake of Rajiv's defeat in 1989. Yashveer Singh, the next in league, was an Ajit Singh appointee. Ajit Singh, the Industry Minister in VP's cabinet, took almost a unilateral decision without even consulting his Prime Minister. Yashveer Singh, a western UP landlord from Muradabad, was a Charan Singh protégé. From all account he was an unlikely of appointments. A JNU professor of biotechnology, he resigned from the University to, as he said in a personal interview in his Nizammuddin house, help realise the dream of 'Kisan Neta Charan Singh, presently resting at 'Kisan Ghat', part of Delhi's sprawling celebrity post-cremation address. Narasimha Rao brought in Naval Kishore Sharma, who kept his political ambition burning all though his tenure. Then there
But importantly Khadi failed in its own avowed mission. Its easy stiffening into an establishment proved its own un-viability that it was accused of throughout its career promoted by Gandhi. It was Gandhi’s vehicle of achieving real Swaraj for India’s famished masses. It was a weapon to bring rural invigoration. It was strangely enough an a-political process to politicize a long dormant rural population. It was a tool from traditional wisdom to introduce modern politics in a feudal populace. Freedom, and not just independence, was supposed to come in its wake. It was to become self-spreading, a ‘current coin’. Neither it became self-spreading, nor did freedom come in its train. Transfer of power got executed largely because of gradual British loss of control on Indian administrative and military machinery. It also lost to some extent control over Indian mind. To that extent Khadi contributed. But important question is to what degree Indian mind rebelled against British.3

People’s Movement seldom yields the targeted results. By its very nature, the people’s movements as a rule are ranged against an established authority. The cause of the people’s movement are generally either the insensitivity on the part of the ruling caucus or infringement of the given rights of the populace or perceived wrongs committed by the authority. Therefore, more often than not, a people’s movement only has a reactive agenda and therein lays its core limitation. Drawn by angry rhetoric and aroused passion, the phase of crests are short and, if the movement is long drawn, interspersed by long gestation. The force against which a people’s movement is ranged is established, confident of coercive apparatus at its command and legitimate till the contending hegemony tilts the balance out of its favour. Moreover, given the pelf and power that it wields it can at least temporarily cause confusion among the cadres through its malicious and self-serving manufacturing of propaganda. People’s Movement, on the other hand, have a loose organizational structure and an anarchic apex decision making body, a reactive ideology and powerful emotions, and is weighed down by the pressure of building a precedence. People’s Movement is marred also by ideological controversies concerning objectives, techniques, and social ideals.

was a Socialist ideologue known less for administrative acumen. At present there is Mahesh Sharma, a BJP appointee with some experience of rural entrepreneurship.

3 See Ashis Nandy’s The Intimate Enemy for a study about the colonization of Indian mind.
By not yielding to the resistance offered by a people’s movement, the authority sticks to its constitutional core which assumes Climb-Down a governance failure. Therefore, a Clamp-Down is generally preferred mode of response. Any authority which gets trapped in the Climb-Down—Clamp-Down dilemma sows the seeds of its own extinction. While for the time being in the face of resistance it steels itself against any Climb-Down, the very occurrence of resistance robs it of its durability and digs its eventual collapse. The authority at some distanced date might roll back its own policy pronunciations so solemnly announced just a time ago, or incapacitate right-threatening legislation so convincingly brought into existence. At the moment of denouement, however, a Climb-Down is perceived to be a suggestion to the weakness and an invitation to greater insurgency. Therefore, the cost of Clamp-Down or even of the protracted face-off, in terms of financial, rights-violation, and authority’s own longevity and legitimacy, is disregarded at the alter of short-term but repressed peace. To cite some clarificatory examples, let’s bring twentieth century history of India’s freedom struggle to stand witness. The foremost among the historical moments is 1905-7 resistance against the Bengal Partition effected by the crude Curzon. Another is that spark of Rowlatt Bills that ignited the hitherto donnant but simmering sentiments of national hurt and insult.

While policy discussion was on for long, in July 1905, Curzon’s government at Calcutta announced division of the vast presidency of Bengal on grounds of administrative efficiency. With the birth of a new province of ‘Eastern Bengal and Assam’, on 16th October 1905 Bengal’s partition was effected despite precipitation of the nationalist opinion against any such move by the government. Contrary to the government’s ‘administrative efficiency’ argument, the nationalist opinion underscored political motive and imputed ‘divide and rule’ principle to its governance logic. When clamor for abrogation of partition caught steam, Curzon determinedly rejected any suggestion to defer the partition adding the caveat that ‘the prestige of the government of India will be seriously weakened’. In January 1906, Morley, the new Viceroy, announced that the partition was a ‘settled fact’ and government could never retrace its path backward.

Outside the governmental domain however anti-partition agitation raged and ranted. Sumit Sarkar’s masterly study of the Anti-Partition Movement makes a listing
of the types of the various ideological and methodological trends prevalent under that umbrella. By 1907, the Calcutta air had been laden with issues far beyond the annulment of the Partition. That was the success of the movement as it stretched itself to the domain hitherto unexplored. The partition was annulled in 1911. The authorities claimed that Climb-Down was not in response to the nationalist agitation. But the fact remained that annulment was in recognition of the more confident strides that the nationalist movement had undoubtedly taken.

In February-March 1919, in complete disregard of post-war national hope and expectation, the Government of India brought forward a set of legislations to be made into law. Known popularly as Rowlatt Bills, the provisions in the Bills were meant to supplement existing criminal laws and were to be exercised in dealing with dangerous situation that could arise due to post-war discontent. The laws were seen draconian in contemporary perception. Gandhi was bed-ridden and slowly recovering after a prolonged illness when he read about its impending promulgation and the news ‘stirred me to the very depths’. He termed the law ‘unjust, subversive of the principle of the liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals.’ Gandhi warned the Viceroy of ‘mighty conflagration’ if Bills were not retracted. Other leaders too spoke in similar vain. In the assembly, Srinivasa Sastri spoke of an agitation of unprecedented magnitude that would unfold.

Gandhi took up the cudgels and advised the country to take up to his remedy of Satyagraha. In Gandhi’s conception Satyagraha was a step forward from the

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4 Sarkar, Sumit, 1973; The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-08, People’s Publishing House.

5 'To me, the Bills are the aggravated symptoms of the deep-seated disease. They are a striking demonstration of the determination of the Civil Service to retain its grip of our necks. There is not the slightest desire to give up an iota of its unlimited powers and if the Civil Service is to retain its iron rule over us and if the British commerce is to enjoy its present unholy and privileged position, I feel that the Reforms will not be worth having. I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us. If we succumb we are done for.' ‘Letter to VS Srinivas Sastri’, February 9 1919, CWMG vol.15, 87

6 'Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.' 'The Satyagraha Pledge', February 24 1919, (CWMG vol.15,101)
petitioning that the political class hitherto resorted to for grievance redress. He worked hard to give an organized expression to popular resentment. Traveling across the country he addressed public meetings and press alike, propounding Satyagraha and demanding sacrifices. At Tanjore, on 24th March, Gandhi spoke that it was national duty to discharge ‘when a nation felt that any particular legislation was a national degradation.’ A Satyagraha pledge was circulated for the volunteers to commit themselves to civil disobedience of laws till they were unilaterally withdrawn. On 6th April 1919 which was observed as a day of ‘humiliation and prayer’ a call for the general country-wide hartal was given. ‘It was merely an expression of grief, an act of self denial, a process of purification.’ Immediate consequence of such a call despite its avowed and sanctimonious adherence to non-violence was a violent burst of seething discontent in parts of the country.

On 30th March itself violence claimed half a dozen lives in Delhi police firing. Later, Gandhi received prohibitory orders from the governments of Delhi and Punjab. Gandhi disobeyed and persisted with his travel plans. Near Delhi he was arrested and released back in Bombay on the next day. His arrest fuelled further violence and on 13th April, unconnected though, Jalliainwala Bagh massacre happened. The historic admission of ‘Himalayan miscalculation’ meant withdrawal of civil disobedience component of the temporarily suspended Satyagraha. That in many sense ended the Rowlatt Satyagraha without achieving its goal of repeal. Succeeding events overwhelmed the demand of repeal and the country got drawn into issues thrown by repression in Punjab and betrayal of Khilafat cause by the Allies. Rowlatt Laws however in its three years of existence was invoked not even once. It was left to lapse.

In case of local skirmishes like Champaran and Kaira, people's success at having bent the authority into meaningful compromise was sheepishly spurned rather

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7 'I think the growing generation will not be satisfied with petitions, etc. We must give them something effective. Satyagraha is the only way, it seems to me, to stop terrorism.' 'Letter to Sir Dinshaw Wachha', February 25 1919, (CWMG vol.15,107)

8 'The acceptance, by the country, of the new criminal laws was a degradation, a humiliation. When a nation felt that any particular legislation was a national degradation, they had a clear duty to discharge. In the countries of the West, when the governors did a wrong, there ensued bloodshed. In India, on the other hand, the people instinctively abhorred the doctrine of violence. Therefore, they had to find out by what other means they could enforce their will upon the Government.' 'Speech on Satyagraha Movement', March 24 1919, (CWMG vol.15,148)

9 'Speech on Satyagraha Movement', March 24 1919. (CWMG vol.15, 149)
than acknowledged. The authority’s argument was such as to nullify intervention both from Gandhi and other educated Indians and claim that these agitations ‘did not in any way affect the course of action’.  

As evident from the sources, the authorities, outmaneuvered, were ill-at-ease to acknowledge concessions (CWMG vol.their Climb-Down) wrung by Gandhi. It was later claimed that Gandhi was given a silken-glove treatment, firstly, due to the governments’ desire for domestic tranquility at the time of war and, secondly, due to the Gandhi’s image of ‘social and humanitarian activist’. When he began to advise Muslims to adopt non-cooperation as a response 0that befitted Allies betrayal of their religious motif, Montagu warned Gandhi of hardening government posture.  

It is true that Gandhi succeeded in achieving tangible results in all the local skirmishes that he got involved with prior to declaration of non-co-operation. From the evidence available, it is obvious that he achieved his successes at a time when he was less a threat to the government. He negotiated his deals with impeccable data that he commended due to his team’s painstaking grassroots research and documentation of the respective grievances be at Viramgam, Champaran, or Kaira. But in the aftermath of Punjab martial law atrocity that included massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and its ‘plain, deliberate shielding of the officials’ at the hands of all white Hunter Commission, as his voice turned hoarse with rebellious tone and his words took tinge of battle-cry government’s own approach towards him became hard. Gandhi never again succeeded in getting a concession from the government, not even abrogation of the much-abused Salt-Law, and, as the Cambridge Historians would say, not even the freedom, which according to them was more a negotiated Transfer of Power made exigent due to extraneous factors rather than internal pro-freedom movement. Even

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10 ‘Sir Sankaran has argued that the bureaucracy took action only when it was moved by the driving force of the Congress, in other words, educated Indians. His colleagues have argued that the bureaucracy has been ever vigilant of the interests of the masses whom educated Indians have never represented and for whom they have cared little.’ ‘Sir Sankaran Nair and Champaran’, YI, August 27 1919, (CWMG vol.16, 63)

11 ‘Mr. Montagu does not like the khilafat agitation that is daily gathering force. In answer to questions put in the House of Commons, he is reported to have said that whilst he acknowledged that I had rendered distinguished services to the country in the past, he could not look upon my present attitude with equanimity and that it was not to be expected that I could now be treated as leniently as I was during the Rowlatt Act agitation.’ ‘Mr Montagu on the Khilafat Agitation’, YI, July 28 1920, (CWMG vol.18,88)

12 ‘Speech on Hunter Committee Report’, Navajivan, July 4 1920, (CWMG vol.17, 513)
the recent book by Patrick French gives credence to Loss of Control theory that brought the freedom. As per the Salt-Law, it could not be removed even by Nehru's interim government. It was done only after India gained independence and its abrogation was one of the first administrative decisions of an independent country. Nehru perhaps took the decision to molly-cajole an ideologically distanced Gandhi.

Despite the non-cooperation movement against the government for the redress of Punjab wrong and Khilafat betrayal, the government did not yield an inch. In fact as Gandhi later said that Congress was ready to waive prosecution for impeachment of guilty officers, to waive penalties. Gandhi desired its mere commitment against repeating such occurrences and not insult India by continuing to give pensions to the offending officers. Government showed no repentance and as evident from its response considered the offending officials as 'distinguished servants of the crown'. Khilafat of course was a 'settled fact'. As Gandhi noted underlying idea beneath this stubborn government attitude was 'not to give anything unless it is absolutely' essential. Simple as the Congress demands were, to the government they seemed difficult as their redress meant obedience to India's will. The government feigning impossibility about the demands betrayed the unwillingness of the power-holders to part with the power that logically should have never belonged to them. All governments, colonial, imperial or domestic, have similar attitude towards the people's movement.

Advocacy therefore to succeed has to be double pronged. While on the one hand it should talk of people's issues grieving their general existence, at the same time it should be clothed in such way as to camouflage the inherent threat to the authority. There lies also the tragedy of the post-independence NGO-propped People's Movement and their abysmal rate of success in achieving what they initially set out to do. Given the financial security that they achieve with the help of foreign

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13 Patrick French, *Liberty of Death: India's journey to independence and division*,

14 'The Government supporters consider the Congress demands to be impossible and repression to be the only way possible to put down non-co-operation. If I believed the Congress demands to be impossible and the use of force to be justifiable for putting down the pursuit of impossible ideals, I should also vote with the Government. I have, therefore, no difficulty about understanding and even appreciating the attitude of the Government and its supporters. But I oppose the Government and thoroughly distrust it, because I so thoroughly understand its attitude. India can never attain freedom by going along the route the Government will take her.' 'Poles Asunder', YI, January 26 1922, (CWMG vol.22, 261)
donor agencies (even if located domestically), their aggression against authority creates a threat perception rather than benevolent bonhomie. But that does not mean paper advocacy can achieve what people’s movement can not. What people’s movement is certain to achieve is a cautious authority wary of taking anti-people measures. Climb-Down or Clamp-Down, the authority faces threat to its existence either way. It is therefore better to know the mind of subject before a decision is effected. There lies the importance of the People’s Movement; in deepening democracy, in reigning in power wielders. The freedom struggle gave us nothing not even the freedom. But it gave us our future: an egalitarian polity, a democratic order, a non-aligned policy, a humane economy, a dream of leading third world morass into a peaceful and non-violent world. It is however ironical that by the turn of the century as our polity moved away from the one-party rule and towards macho Hindutva we are on the brink of losing even that legacy of our disputed freedom.

It is in these paradigmatic confines that one can see India’s struggle for freedom and Cambridge historians boastful explanation regarding the withdrawal of British forces. This paradigm can also help understand Independent India’s State response to the non-political grassroots mobilization of the deprived and the denied on the issues of rights, livelihood or identity. But for the purpose of present this paradigm can help us to see state response to Khadi Movement. The government was even averse to show any sympathy to the Khadi movement. It in fact actively participated in its burial. 'Orders to kill the movement will be orders to destroy, or interfere with, the introduction of the spinning wheel.'\footnote{The movement is a revolution of thought, of spirit. Non-co-operation is a process of purification, and, as such, it constitutes a revolution in one’s ideas. Its suppression, therefore, would amount to co-operation by coercion. Orders to kill the movement will be orders to destroy, or interfere with, the introduction of the spinning wheel, to prohibit the campaign of temperance, and an incitement, therefore, to violence. For any attempt to compel people by indirect methods to wear foreign clothes, to patronize drink-shops, would certainly exasperate them.' 'Notes: Revolution', YI, March 30 1921, CWMG Vol.19: 488.} Gandhi too left no ambiguity about the implicit meanings in his Swadeshi campaign. He projected the outcome optimistically when he said: ‘What with each worker manning the Congress organization bringing himself in touch with every Congress voter, providing him the cotton-sliver, instructing on technicalities of Charkha, maintaining a record of spinners, and then reporting to higher authorities.’ He repeated in meetings after public meetings about
the Swadeshi being 'most powerful weapon against the bureaucracy'.\textsuperscript{16} Khadi became State Dress without the aid of state.

More than his countrymen, however, the government though confounded in action understood the real intent of Gandhi's campaign. Gandhi, in launching the movement for non-co-operation, brought into being a parallel system of ruler-ruled discourse, alternative to that established by the colonial government. He was not opposing or was in protracted struggle against the colonial regime but was attempting to establish a communication with his countrymen in a space autonomous from that of the government. In the colonial system, fear and subjugation were dominant themes; the participation of the people in the governance was minimal. In the Gandhi's space the dictum was: 'Government over self is the truest Swaraj'. His programme was for the enfranchisement of the millions of India by recognizing the necessity and the value of non-violence. In 1921 March Gandhi said in an interview that concentration upon hand-spinning and hand-weaving was for making India 'economically self-contained' and his prohibition movement was for 'inward purification'.\textsuperscript{17} By focusing on 'making India economically self-contained' and on 'inward purification' through temperance, Gandhi was attacking the government on its role in economic drain and immoral taxation system that raised money by selling liquor. Colonialism pertained to economic subservience of India to the British manufacturing interest. In its own limited but powerfully articulated way, Khadi was an attempt at severing the economic relationship that defined the colonialism. Therefore beneath its constructive agenda, Khadi was subversive of the British supremacy.

Gandhi's was the politics of periphery. By focusing on inconsequential individuals he somehow negated the presence of the citadel. Mass and not mediation was his political weapon. It left many of his Congress comrades confused. Gandhi's simultaneous espousal of India's freedom from British domination and India's reconstruction through self-purification processes irked many an ardent nationalists

\textsuperscript{16} 'In swadeshi there is an effective way to swaraj and redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs and vindication of the national honour. The main burden of the task of propagating swadeshi lay on the women of India and they must rise to the occasion.' After the speech many ladies gave their jewellery as a gift in the national cause and evinced great enthusiasm about taking the swadeshi vow. 'Speech at women's Meeting', Allahabad, Nov. 29 1920, CWMG vol.19: 44, footnote 2.

\textsuperscript{17} 'Our movement mainly depends for its success not upon propaganda, but upon internal reform and internal strength.' 'Interview to The Daily Herald', March 16 1921, (CWMG vol.19,443)
who were not very sympathetic to the linkage and saw it as delaying India's tryst with her freedom. For Gandhi, India's reconstruction was a vital process as according to him it were Indians who had fallen to temptation offered by the British and not the English who had conquered India by sword. He regarded his package of constructive activities as constituting the road to freedom. It was this agenda of reconstruction of national-self that eventually added to his isolation even when it was also the pursuit that gave him unparalleled mass appeal. His agenda was seen as long-drawn, million-year project. As Nehru had noted quite acerbically that if India was to first achieve universal acceptance of Khadi before she could knock at the freedom-door, she would have to wait till the Greek Kalands.

Khadi was a non-violent political weapon to establish nationalist hegemony over the mass consciousness. By its silent work, the AISA attempted to produce a symbol of nationalist upsurge. Khadi was political in the sense that a simple gesture of wearing it transformed a person into a vehicle of assertion. By donning it on one's body, one conveyed in remarkably silent, non-confrontationist way one's break from imperial chain; unobtrusively one announced one's shift in allegiance. Thereby it provided meekest of individuals a banner to foist one's freedom. But at the same moment, it also provided individuals an opportunity to shift their allegiance from distant and abstract Empire to neighborhood. Khadi was visible, almost universal, articulation of shift in allegiance. It provided autonomy of choice. In doing so it empowered each individual a freedom of thought and action. The independence Gandhi fought for was not only national but also personal. Khadi was the tale of personal empowerment. It conveyed a message to the people that 'they were stronger than they thought and that the rulers were weaker than they imagined'. Their simple gesture of wearing Khadi could contribute in the collapse of the whole edifice. Khadi campaign was not directly 'designed to establish independence but to arm the people with the power to do so'. Most of the Gandhi's campaigns were, as Weber says in a different context, 'about reforming society and the self-reformation of individuals'. There was inextricable linkage between the two. 'Reform yourself and you have started to reform the world, reform the world non-violently and you will have reformed the self.'

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18 On the Salt March, Thomas Weber; p472
Khadi was the uniform of a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi is one whose mind is free from fear and thus residing in the realm of mind a satyagrahi is unconquerable; you can maul the body but the mind you can not bend. Gandhi therefore was aggrieved when a Khadi wearer allowed his Khadi cloth to be torn away by the British police. In some sense such an occurrence showed deficiency in the Satyagrahi.

AISA faced double adversary. On the one side it had mass of illiterate, unskilled, famished and secluded women as its producing agents. On the other hand it had to face the agony of constantly explaining its viability to skeptics. Its organizing workers were lowly paid. Its buyers were discerning customers who complained of lack of quality, durability, convenience etc, in Khadi. Its sales spurt only came when national struggles were launched. Despite its symbolic association with ahimsa, it was not a peace-time uniform. Inadvertently, it did take rebellious hue that restrained considerably its commercial prospects. Government servants who were comparatively better placed on capacity-to-purchase scale would not touch it for the fear of being suspended. Government did not purchase it as that provided legitimacy to that nationalist entrepreneurship. It therefore became a cloak to hide one's inner impurity. This was the second factor that marred Khadi's brand-success. Those who wore it were not always perfect in the public's merciless scrutiny even when constant harping on its 'pure whiteness' had positioned it in public perception as a value-laden cloth. Third factor that restricted its appeal was its association with seemingly backward technology which for the forward-looking, educated generation was unpalatable. They would rather go for textile mills and modern factory production. What alternative answer they had for Khadi's income distributional capacity and mass-employment (even if partial) was not clear, but they were anonymous that modern production system alone could obviate India's poverty. Fourthly, the westernized and vocal section of the population saw it as an attempt to cling to India's poverty. Nehru and others of his socialist ilk often derided it. It was an instrument, they averred, of Gandhi to worship his god of Dardranarayan. They did not see it as invested with poverty-eradicating power. But a concept that scuttled the real issue of class conflict and exploitation from Indian villages. Charkha could only spin the patchwork; it could never cure the real rural affliction. Such an attitude of rejection made AISA's work difficult. Its clientele was mainly illiterate, poverty-afflicted women. Their main concern was to add, however meagre, to their family income. It was no question of
utilizing their idle hours. Their life itself was idle in the absence of productive work consummate with their unskilled capacity. For many of these women spinning was not a supplementary occupation but the only occupation. These women walked miles to the AISA production depot to procure cotton, slivers, or spin thereat or take their wages in lieu of spun yarn. They were paid meagrely. It was a concern for them that Gandhi attempted to unilaterally force rise in their wages. Although, they were at the centre of AISA organization, ironically they had not been its main concern. Consumers were. It was for consumers that Khadi was priced low and produced attractively. But folly was evident. Rise in the wages of spinners owed to backlash of conscience on the part of the organizers. But it was met by surging production and stagnant sales; a recipe for financial breakdown and organizational collapse. Consideration for these women too had restrained AISA's search for most suitable spinning inventory. A suitable charkha was one which could be sufficiently made by village craftsmen; its design so simple that repair could be undertaken by the spinners themselves, its production did not involve import of resources from outside the local village arena. It was a benchmark that exasperated many a courageous souls. Educated India was impatient with Gandhi's vision to determine every step in accordance with the needs of the last men-women.

In the early twenties, Gandhi with extremely limited infrastructure for Khadi production was exhorting Indians to boycott foreign clothes. If there was famine of cloth, he advised, people should simply strip themselves to the bare minimal of covering. 'Indian weather', he said in innumerable of his public speeches, mostly delivered to his urban, middle-class audience, did not need great amount of covering. So boycott could still be resorted to with extremely rudimentary production base for hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi. In mid-thirties, when he re-oriented Khadi to focus more on individual self-sufficiency in clothing matters, he asked his workers to organize Khadi production in such a fashion as to bring an overlap of producers and consumers; that is to say, those who produced must also consume. At the same time he was also raised spinners' wages, as many of them, in his calculation, simply depended on spinning for their survival. Somewhere his calculations lacked clarity. If there were people depending on spinning wage as to survive, how could they be helped by the adoption of self-sufficiency slogan? Food rather than clothing was their priority.
Gandhi's other problem was alliances he attempted towards fulfillment of his agenda. It is somewhat strange that in each of his battles, constructive or political, he sought allegiance with people whom he held responsible, at least partly, for the state of affair he was fighting against. 'The poor folks would seem to have been born in order to toil and moil for us! We have been guilty of a heinous sin, and it is time we expiated it.' Or when he said: 'Unless we discharge our debt, Hinduism will perish.'

He squarely laid blame on a specific section of the society and asked it to perform remedial sacrifice. So it was not the village people, who were more distanced from British imperialism, but educated, urban and connected who were asked to sacrifice. It was not the village people themselves but urban representatives and activists who were the fulcrum of village reconstruction. It was not the dalits but dvija castes on whose shoulders fell the responsibility for the eradication of untouchability. Similarly, village reconstruction programme could only be carried from a place where there was easy availability of funds and suitable connectivity. Keeping with Gandhi's plea that it was the duty of the educated to give back to the village what they had taken from it, most of its organizing board and its advisory board became top-heavy.

Secondly, Wardha was chosen to be its headquarter because there was assured financial and infrastructural help from Jamnalal Bajaj and it was located on the main railway line. 'Central office should be near the main line of the railways and should be easily accessible.'

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19 'The poor folks would seem to have been born in order to toil and moil for us! We have been guilty of a heinous sin, and it is time we expiated it. It is for that purpose that the Sangh was created. It is a stupendous task, but it has to be done. I have said it several times, and shall repeat it today, that, unless we discharge our debt, Hinduism will perish. Untouchability must be destroyed, or else it will destroy Hinduism.' 'Speech at Harijan Colony, Delhi, January 2 1935, (CWMG vol.60, 46)

20 The Congress resolution in the matter contemplates the question of a self-acting, independent and non-political organization consisting of men and women whose primary aim in life would be identification with the villagers and promotion of their welfare. The function of the Board will be to define the programme of village reconstruction work from time to time, to co-ordinate the policy followed in different centres, to collect, collate and circulate information gathered from workers or agents as to the actual condition of the existing village industries, both those that may be flourishing and those that may be perishing, also as to the economic, moral and physical condition of villagers, to carry on research work with the help of specialists and experts and to discover and create a market for surplus village manufactures.' 'AVIA: Object and Constitution', Wardha, December 14 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 449)

21 Most of the money for the support of both Gandhi and his movements was donated by three merchant princes—Ambalal Sarabhai, Jamnalal Bajaj, and Ghanashyam Das Birla—who were among his followers. Jamnalal Bajaj, Gandhi's main benefactor in many of his constructive endeavours, in 1934, contemplated buying a cloth mill. His family members disapproved of his business move. His ostensible purpose, it was said, was to earn more as to contribute into Congress work. Gandhi was non-plussed. He wrote denouncing the step to own a cotton mill by a person who 'had taken so much interest in Khadi'. He advised abandonment of the idea, saying, 'we shall do without such contribution'.

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accessible from all the parts of India. The formation of AISA was aimed at ending the exploitation of artisans. It was thought that the artisans, in due course, would be conscious controllers of the AISA. Instead, AISA got accused of running a most exploitative occupation.

To say that constructive programme of Gandhi was something of strategy of nationalist leadership to keep the masses involved in some kind of activities during the period of ebbs, would be speculative and factually untenable. Civil disobedience could be offered, first, as a measure to redress local wrong, second, to rouse local consciousness. It could be offered for the general cause such as independence only after being suitably prepared. As Gandhi said: 'When civil disobedience is itself devised for the attainment of independence, previous preparation is necessary, and it has to be backed by the visible and conscious effort of those who are engaged in the battle. Civil disobedience is thus a stimulation for the fighters and a challenge to the opponent. Civil disobedience in terms of independence without the co-operation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless.' It was how Gandhi linked constructive work and civil-disobedience.

Gandhi's ingenuity was in linking Khadi, a process and a commodity, with politics. It was not as if he invented Khadi. It was there, before him; it was there, even

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22 The All-India Village Industries Association takes a long time to be born. All the consolation I can give the public is that all the available time at the disposal of J. C. Kumarappa and myself is being devoted to the task. Three questions confront us: location of the Central Office, composition of the Central Board and agencies. There is difficulty, too, regarding choice of the Central office. We would gladly establish it in a village, if that is possible. But our choice is limited by two considerations. We do not want to invest the meagre funds, that have been promised or have already come, in land and brick and mortar. We have, therefore; to confine our selection to such places where we can get the required accommodation for the asking. The second limitation is that the Central office should be near the main line of the railways and should be easily accessible from all the parts of India.' In the throes of birth, Harijan, November 23 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 387)

23 'Every individual spinner receives personal attention and is taught to use better tools in a better manner. Their wages are in many cases trebled, even quadrupled. It is difficult to forecast the result of this new scheme, both to the individual workers and the nation at large. One result is obvious. These artisans have ceased to be the exploited class. Presently they will be conscious controllers of the A.I.S.A. as they are today its prime, though unconscious, shareholders.' Instructive Figures', Harijan, July 10 1937, (CWMG vol.65, 379)

24 'The constructive programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of poorna swaraj by truthful and non-violent means. Complete independence through truth and non-violence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without.' 'Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place', December 13 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 165)
during the times he took up its advocacy and the full-blown brand-building exercise. His contribution was not in revival, however intangible in real terms, but in linking national subjugation at the hand of foreign power to that of internal decline and not the external superiority. He argued not in adoring the body with self-woven fabric but for rebuilding the shattered self through industry, discipline and penance. Khadi was a tool, an important part of the tool-kit called constructive programme. Or, as he said, Khadi was the sun of solar system that the constructive programme was. It was the richness of the indigenous craft of cloth-making that had attracted the avarice of the alien-traders, who later took to territorial ambitions. It was this fine fiddling of fingers that wove clothes that enriched rapacious rulers or, at later times, the collaborating middle-men. This was the craft that had attracted colonization. This was the craft that shall alone lead to deliverance of India from its sad state. 'The very thing that was a cause of our slavery will open the door to our freedom.'

It therefore was not important just as import substituting commodity. Its production and consumption shorn of eternal values of truth and non-violence was of no consequence. It was the stripping of truth and non-violence in the trading operations of the Company and Indian’s perverted complicity that had led to India’s colonization. The reinstatement of Khadi eventually meant reinstatement of truth and non-violence in the everyday practices and experiences of ordinary as well as not-so-ordinary Indians. Khadi therefore needed to be protected against any creeping of impurities. Its guardians were AISA and its 3000 strong workforce. These workers were the fulcrums on which linkage between Khadi and values of truth and non-violence weighed. That is why uncertified Khadi was to be shunned. Embezzlers were to be dealt stringently and immediately stripped of their legitimacy. That is why AISA was the sole custodian of Khadi. That is why ethics formed around Khadi, its portability, its abhorrence to mechanization, its favouring a decentralized production, its simple technology, its local consumer base, its emphasis on the use of local resources, all these became its dogma and brooked no deviation or debate.

Khadi was a tool of mobilization, an ‘instrument of instruction’, employed in a deeply divided society, with entrenched poverty, inequality and powerlessness. It was chosen by Gandhi to be his politics. It was part of a larger package and yet was the

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25 Speech at AISA Meeting, Khadi Jagat, December 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 176)
pivot of the constructive work politics.\textsuperscript{26} Charkha was revived as a tool of mobilization. Gandhi was at pains to explain non-political aim of Charkha. He reiterated its economic and spiritual aspects and explained away its political aspects as that above the mundane, of lofty kind, above the contention of power-politics. Khadi, he said, was meant to provide bread to hungry, work to idle, and lift national prosperity by substituting import. It was in understanding this agenda of Khadi that Nehru failed when he accused Khadi workers being a non-politicized lot. Political class showed impatience with Khadi programme. Socialists came out as the most organized group of opponent to Gandhi's politics. Since 1921, Congress had a flag made of Khadi and the wheel occupied a central place on it. Yet, no other constructive activity was so much ridiculed and denounced as Khadi. The rapid stride in mechanization of textile industry added much to intellectual contempt for hand-spinning.\textsuperscript{27}

Gandhi argued against the widespread notion that power flew out of legislature to the people. It was grave misconception which had long made educated Indians to argue for parliamentary participation. Power, Gandhi said, resides in the people. In 1941, he wrote, 'It has been my effort for the last twenty-one years to convince the people of this simple truth.' Civil disobedience, due to its association with people, is the storehouse of power. A people could refuse compliance of law formulated by legislatures. No amount of coercive apparatus of state could break the resolution of a people, fortified by willingness to suffer the consequences of their

\textsuperscript{26}'Will not the working of the constructive programme bring Congressmen into conflict with the Government? My answer was that the whole programme was so conceived as to avoid conflict. Of course the most innocent activity may be so manipulated as to provoke conflict. I expect every Congress worker to do his best to avoid it. But there is no help for it, if the Government prohibit such activities because they are undertaken by Congressmen who believe that the working of the constructive programme will bring swaraj. That is the only non-violent way to achieve the end. Swaraj by non-violent means must come from the creative effort of those who desire it. The Government should welcome every such effort, unless they want to prevent even cent per cent non-violent movement. In that case conflict will become unavoidable. As I have already said, today most of the items of constructive work happen to be—like feeding and clothing—common cause between the Government and the people.' 'Constructive Programme and Government', \textit{Harijan}, January 25 1942.

\textsuperscript{27}Gandhi's proposition was: "Khadi is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, male or female, is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every one of the villages of India; or till sufficient cities are built up to displace the villages so as to give the villagers the necessary comforts and amenities that a well-regulated life demands and is entitled to." 'Is Khadi Economically Sound?', \textit{Harijan}, June 20 1936.
stand-off. Gandhi’s constructive programme was an effort to prepare people to acknowledge and wield this power in them. Often, at the beginning of recognized historical denouements, he would reiterate that civil-disobedience required complete adherence of constructive work. Civil disobedience without compliance of constructive programme, he said, was criminal.

Khadi was a programme pregnant with potential to inaugurate ‘economic freedom and equality of all in the country’. Arnold speaks of Gandhi’s ‘propensity for seeing the problems of the peasantry in moral rather than economic terms’.²⁸ Such an interpretation if goes unchallenged is almost sacrilege to the life and work of Gandhi. The history of Khadi falsifies such naïve interpretation. Khadi was the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, “the livery of India’s freedom”.²⁹ In Khudai Khidmatgars’ training camps on non-violence Charkha spinning was an important occupation.³⁰

In late forties, Khadi slogan came to be identified with idea rather than the cloth: VASTRA NAHIN VICHAR HAI. It took full growth and development of Khadi movement to transform itself from being a commodity to become an idea to be realized sometimes in a distant future. From being just an import substituting commodity it became a symbol reflecting everythng abstract. Its conversion into an idea was also a measure of its failure in becoming a practical reality that Gandhi

²⁸ David Arnold, Gandhi: Profiles in Power, Longman, Great Britain, 2001, p74. Gandhi’s constructive programme was, David Arnold writes, ‘rich in national symbolism and the assertion of cultural independence from colonial rule’. (126) Khadi and the spinning wheel, or charkha, were powerful symbols of India’s capacity to regain control of its own economy and sever the imperial connection.

²⁹ ‘Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties.’ 'Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place', December 13 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 150)

³⁰ Statement to the Press, The Hindu, December 12 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 143)
wanted it to become. Gandhi had himself written: 'Practice will always fall short of the theory, even as the drawn line falls short of the theoretical line of Euclid.'

Gandhi selected men, provided ideology and method, gave moral support, launched multi-lingual propaganda vehicle of _Harijan_ and forged regional organizations for the campaign against untouchability. All these he did from the confines of Yervada jail. It was from the jail that he initiated, guided, and ran the movement. His prolific communication with various correspondents, his press interviews, his extracting of right to undertake campaign while still being imprisoned; all were signs of his passionate pursuance and belief in the cause. _Harijan_ campaign had drawn the same passionate personae who just a while ago was engaged wholly into the Khadi movement. There was nothing strange or twist in the change of emphasis. Khadi had taken sufficient foothold in the mental as well as physical landscape of Indian body. With mechanization in place, it would grow at its gradual pace. Also, it was logical that his emphasis moved from body to soul, although Khadi was no less claimant to freeing mind from colonial control.

Gandhi attempted to re-orient Congress programme to constructive work. Its political programmes of meetings and agitations often demonstrated the life in Congress. Gandhi’s programme was seen as non-political programme. The linkage between Congress prestige and programme and constructive work was not appreciated by most of Congress workers. Whenever crescendo fell silent, Congress was said to have become inane. Gandhi did not agree and said: 'Still waters run deep'. 'Continuous feverish activity can only promote violence and therefore retard the steady march of non-violent action.' During the Individual Satyagraha, Gandhi further restricted the right to offer agitation to the select few. This restriction added further to the charge that the movement of Congress has fell moribund. It was in answer to this charge that Gandhi offered his thirteen-fold constructive programme. Khadi had to work against almost settled prejudices among the villagers, against unscrupulous competition without State protection, and against the prevalent opinion

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31 'Khadi is a controversial subject. Many people think that in advocating khadi I am sailing against a headwind and am sure to sink the ship of swaraj and that I am taking the country to the dark ages.' 'Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place', December 13 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 150)

32 Statement to the Press, October 28 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 55-62)
of so-called experts in the science of economics, against even the demand of Khadi wearers for progressively cheaper Khadi.

This study provides an insight into a single man’s obsessive pursuance of his conviction that brought not just ‘truth and non-violence’ into the common man’s parlance but also gave, in the evocative phrase of Nehru, a ‘livery of freedom’. Everyone was involved in the Khadi enterprise, irrespective of gender, age, or class. Gandhi said, ‘I have a dream that people will wear home-spun khadi just as they eat home-made food.’ He did his quota of spinning with religious punctuality. ‘His thin, slightly nervous hands worked rapidly, the spinning wheel made a soft, warm, comforting buzz, and his lap was soon filled with fluffy cotton fibre. He could spin half a hank of thread, or four hundred and twenty yards, at one sitting.’ Spinning provides him with some of his loveliest metaphors. Krishna manifested himself in the form of clothes to Draupadi. Spinning and weaving are, then, the Lords’ work. Gandhi drew similes from his life experiences to argue for Khadi. A colleague recalled, ‘once heard Bapu say to Ba, ‘when I married you, I promised to supply you with food and raiment. I cannot claim to have supplied you with food—we both have to thank our benefactors for that—but I can at least supply you with raiment.’ After Ba died, Gandhi said, ‘I now feel really alone—Ba was the warp and woof of my life.’

Charkha is philologically equivalent to a circle and metaphorically to the revolving wheel of the universe—samsara. One of Kabir’s songs is based on this imagery. Tulsidas in Ramayana compared a saint’s nature with cotton. Free from all tempting desires as cotton is free from taste and spotlessly pure he is described as...

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33 Work for everyone, Khadi Jagat, September 1941, (CWMG vol.74, 328)
34 ‘According to my definition, there cannot be true swaraj as long as there is exploitation. Mere change from British to Indian rule does not mean swaraj. As long as one class dominates over another, as long as the poor remain poor or become poorer, there will be no swaraj. In my swaraj the millions will live happily.’ Speech at Sevagram, October 12 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 7)
35 Quoted in Mehta, Ved, Mahatma Gandhi and his apostles, p19
36 Quoted in Chatterjee, Margaret, Gandhi’s Religious Thought, 1983,
37 ‘Baro Dada adds in a footnote that a charkha is philologically equivalent to a circle and metaphorically to the revolving wheel of the universe—samsara. One of Kabir’s songs is based on this imagery. But the most important part of Baro Dada’s letter is his emphasis on the stern fact that howsoever impossible the charkha may appear to the worldly-wise, it is the only possible thing for the country’s real advance. It is the only thing that can give substance to any big political move that the country may make.’ The revolving wheel, YI, Jan. 15 1925, (CWMG vol.25, 593)
being rich with fine virtues as a cottonpod is full of fine fibres.  

Clothes prepared from cotton fibres cover many a defect of body and protect it from heat and cold. Around Khadi was started at various places village reconstruction programme. Rajagopalachari’s Ashram in Tamil Nadu came to focus on many aspects of village reconstruction such as basic personal hygiene and communal sanitation along with their main work of Khadi. According to Gandhi, true Swaraj was free from exploitation. 'Mere change from British to Indian rule does not mean Swaraj. As long as one class dominates over another, as long as the poor remain poor or become poorer, there will be no swaraj. In my swaraj the millions will live happily. They will get good food, decent house and enough clothing.' Khadi was 'a sure symbol of oneness with the millions'.

All through his political career in India, Gandhi talked of constructive work; his way to national freedom lay through constructive work. Yet each of the agenda within this constructive work remained awfully short of their avowed goal. His effort at melding the communal schism was proved so intractable that he fell silent. His old comrades like Ali Brothers took divergent ways once Khilafat agitation collapsed. His effort at prohibition, when Congress ministries formed, met with sceptical calculation from his own political associates. More he talked of the eradication of untouchability more he was accused of being believer in Varnasharam. More he talked of Khadi more it became a uniform of hypocrisy.

What Gandhi preached, and practised, was an Economy of Equilibrium. His answer to the ills of modernism. For preaching this, Gandhi earned an epithet of the 'Medieval Monk'. What he meant was the maintenance of a balance between man’s rapacity and the earth’s regenerative potential. Any imbalance in this equilibrium, owing to man’s rapaciousness and his tendency to rapidly transform his need into greed, would be civilisationally catastrophic. His reluctance to allow machinery to

38 Maganlal Gandhi, Charkha Shastra, 1924, p9

39 'Referring to the report from Gandhi Ashram conducted by Rajagopalachari, Gandhi wrote: 'From the report read at the meeting it appears that round khadi as the centre, removal of untouchability and of the drink evil, rural sanitation and medical relief have sprung up.' 'Byproducts of Khadi', YI, July 19 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 74)

40 Speech at Sevagram, October 12 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 6)

41 Khudai Khidmatgars and Badshah Khan, Harijan, November 19 1938, CWMG vol.68, 117
acquire a dominant role in man’s economic quest stemmed from this concern. Machinery is permissible as long as it does not become a complementary tool to man’s rapacity. Machine would exploit nature many times more than a man can do himself. As the earth has its own pace of regeneration and the man’s greed knows no bounds, there was the need to put a restrain over man. This aspect of his criticism of modern civilisation was a later day development. In the beginning, as he lays down in his 1909 publication, Hindswaraj, it is the moral aspect of modern civilisation with which he was more concerned.

Charkha was the product of this Economics of Equilibrium. Gandhi was often ridiculed for his obstinate obsession with charkha. He, however, regarded his contribution in the revival of the charkha as of more vital importance than his role as the leader of the India’s freedom struggle. He wanted posterity to remember him as a man who revived the charkha.

The spread of Khadi, so successfully propagated by Gandhi, was a deliberate step from the increasing westernization of Indian dress. Gandhi recognized that dress was a concrete symbol to which everybody could relate, and portrayed his disillusionment with the British through his gradual shedding of western garments. This was not merely a rejection of western values but a reassertion of Indian values as morally superior as well as socially, politically and economically more appropriate to India.

Not content with merely breaking the link between the dress of the Indian and western elite, Gandhi chose as his image for India the clothing and lifestyle most antithetical to the British and to their ideas of progress. He encouraged all Indians to identify with poor millions, not just be wearing the product of their labour but by also sharing their labour. All men and women were to spin their own thread and so participate in the production of their own garments. In short, Gandhi invited Indians, whatever their background, religion or caste, to be like villagers, thereby providing an alternative model of modernization to the prevalent western model.
Appendix 1

Following is an extract of long interview conducted by the researcher in 1998 with Jailok Takhur, who is no more. I met him at Muzaffarpur, whereat he is the Chairman of Zila Khadi Gramodyog Sangh. The interview is important as it shows there was other understanding and operationalisation of Khadi movement, which was while retaining the official line also had distinct grassroots understanding.

Oral Testimony

Jailok Takhur is doyen of Khadi in present day Bihar. I met him at Muzaffarpur, whereat he is the Chairman of Zila Khadi Gramodyog Sangh. Above eighty, he retains a sterling memory, remembering almost to the date of his exploits during the 'Quit India' outbreak in 1942. Jailok clearly relished talking of his exploits during the Quit India Movement going by the details to which went and time he gave. Gandhi initially, he said, was not in favour of Khadi worker's participation in politics of freedom movement. Khadi workers were to focus primarily on the constructive activities. But surely there was to be some political utility of a cadre disciplined, dedicated and trained Khadi workers. Gandhi called them 'Reserve Force' or 'Soldiers in Barrack'. In 1942, when the last call of 'Do or Die' was given, their utility was discovered. At the commencement of 'the last and the best war', Gandhi exhorted these constructive 'reserve force' to consign their whole in the struggle. In consequence, Khadi organization came to be regarded as the citadels of treason by the government. The government's suspicion brought prison for workers, forceful closures of Khadi production centres, sealed retail shops, frozen bank-accounts and many other things. Government's vindictive action resulted in the total collapse of the painstakingly created Khadi super-structure. In 1942, Jailok Thakur, a 22 year old lad, was at Jamshedpur, working there in a Khadi Bhandar.

'We used to receive some 300 copies of Gandhi's Harijan which were then published in three languages of Hindi, English and Gujarati. I used to stand outside the Khadi shop exhorting people to buy Harijan. Jamshedpur is a multilingual town. At the time it was too anglicized. TATA officers used to get their clothes stitched in Calcutta. Harijan, however, was best propaganda machine for Khadi sales. Dadabhai Naroji's
grandson who worked at TATA was an ardent believer in Khadi wearing, although he was skeptical of Satyagraha.

'K D Dastur was another high healed parsi official who wore stiff clothes. Once he passed though the pavement across the Khadi shop. I approached him and said, 'Sir, this is Gandhiji's newspaper'. He took the newspaper off my hand and asked, 'How much?' 'Two anna', I said. Next day he himself came down to me to ask for the regular subscription of the newspaper. We were not in favour of annual subscription of the newspaper although such a provision existed at the payment of five rupee. Annual subscription curtailed the opportunity to interact with the readers and their family members, our potential recruits in the national struggle. Once who read Harijan immediately also bought Khadi. I was in favour of personal contacts with readers. I took only eight annas from Dastur with the assurance that I shall drop the newspaper myself every week at his door. Dastur too became a habitual Khadi wearer. Later, after the police revolt at Jamshedpur, Dastur was arrested. TISCO went on lightening strike. Even its furnace was shut down.

'On 10th August 1942 a police strike broke out in Jamshedpur. It was first such strike in the country. Ramanand Tiwari was a police constable who facilitated traffic near our shop. He often used to drop in at our shop to read Harijan. He became instrumental in organizing the strike. It was totally non-violent. The striking police handed over their weapon. A total of 25 people were relieved of their police job. As the police strike broke, the TISCO became charged with excitement. Gandhi had already sounded the bugle of 'do or die' on 8th of August at Bombay. At Jamshedpur, the police action was swift. They clamped heavily on the Khadi activites, sealing the Khadi retail shop. Although magisterial order existed for arresting Khadi workers, police officials were sympathetic to our cause and we were allowed to flee. An arrest warrant was issued in my name. I fled to Jharia in Dhanbad district to work with Khurtshidbehan Captain, sister of Dadabhia Naroji, She was organizing the coal miners there. Tommies arrested her too and soon I was on run again.
This time to Simri. Ramdev Takhur was my cousin. He was a disciple of J B Kriplani. He had also participated in the Champaran Satyagraha. He had his Khadi producing centre at Simri, Madhubani, which was burnt down by English during the 1942 agitation. Ramdev had sent a message for me and we arranged to meet in the mangrove in Bathua village at Pusa. The village headmen were held responsible for any nationalist activity in their village. They had to report to the police of any such activities. Of our meeting at the Bathua mangrove, news was leaked and the police came to raid the place. However, we avoided arrest, taking advantage of the dense mangrove. An arrest warrant was issued against my name at Pusa police station. Immediately afterwards, I headed southward, to Hazaribagh.

Here, while I stayed in a mohhalla inhabited mostly by Ansari Muslims, I got engaged in a local college politics. Although, I had refrained from giving my real identity, my Khadi clothes made my movements in the area quite conspicuous. I was also circulating cyclostyled pamphlets, using a machine owned by a Christian college principal. A plan to eliminate the DIG Mr. Tenbrook was forged. In those days, Bihar had only two DIGs, one responsible each for south and north zone. As north zone DIG, Tenbrook had earned a notoriety for being a brutal police officer. His elimination was a revengeful act.

It, however, remained unaccomplished due to the infiltration of an informer in our rank. My hideout in the Okani colony was busted. After much drama, on 3 January 1943, I was arrested. I was released after an internship of eleven month at Hazaribagh jail, on 30 November. Police gave me a ticket for Samastipur. I was a free man. But in reality, my real persona still had two arrest warrants issued against. Instead of Samastipur, I headed for Ranchi. Luck would not be favouring me, though. I was recognized. Police found out my antecedents and I was arrested. This was real arrest as here I was my real self. After a two month and twenty six days stay in Ranchi jail I was taken to Samastipur Jail. Here, I met Kaporri Takhur, later to become the Chief Minsiter of Bihar. In June 1944, I was released on health ground. At Hazaribagh jail, I was given first class facility, given my political prisoner status. There the conditions were
extremely conducive and my health had undergone positive improvement. At Ranchi and Samasthipur, however, I underwent a marked decline in my health.

'After the release, I went to Balughat at the bank of Budhi Gandak to recuperate. It was here that the Bihar branch of AISA initially had its headquarters. It was later shifted to Madhubani. While there, I tried reviving the place. For three years I was there.'

Jailok Takhur has not only an agile mind but is acutely aware of the need to put things in perspective. Takhur's oral narration of his involvement with Khadi campaign and national movement for freedom throws light on varied aspects of the campaign. His narration reveals an ambivalence of Gandhi towards political utility of Khadi workers. It also questions Nehru's assumption that Khadi workers were much cocooned individuals, a de-politicized lot. As the career of Takhur shows Khadi workers did help in converting and recruiting common people for the national cause. Their work itself was politics. Takhur's narration also shows that truth and non-violence was not always a policy with Khadi workers in pursuance of national goal. Just as Khadi faced competition from spurious Khadi, Khadi workers too impersonated and disguised their real identity during the struggle. But just as Nehru had repeatedly scorned at Khadi's economic utility, even while calling it 'livery of freedom', much of intelligentsia too remained skeptical of values that Gandhi's campaign had invested in it.