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 Samasthipur Jail. Here, I met Kaporri Takhur, later to become the Chief Minister 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 Ganddak 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.