Chapter Three

A Proclamation of Ideological Independence
It was in the *Hind Swaraj*¹ that Gandhi first mentions of 'ancient and sacred hand-loom'.² The idea is presented at the head of his critique of machinery, which was held responsible for India's impoverishment.³ Although erroneously understood at the time, Gandhi presents the idea at the culmination of two dominant and Siamese themes that runs through the text. The first of the two themes asserts that theoretical and institutional operatives - the philosophical, political, social, economic formulations - required to run a civilization can not be determined by factors shorn of what Ruskin terms 'social affection'.⁴ Second, if civilization does turn into a 'slavish' system then only through the observance of ideals of *Satyagraha* or soul force—'it involves sacrifice of self.'⁵—as against the application of 'the brute force' that one could reestablish the mores of morality in the civilization gone astray. It is the morality of existence as well as of the struggle to exist that links the two themes. The core of *Hind Swaraj* wrestles with 'The condition of India'.⁶ In it Gandhi grapples with the issues of India's bondage, ideology of liberation struggle, and the content of freedom. It is in this context of India, its past civilization and present 'degeneration', its pristine 'interior' and enslaved 'educated', that *Hind Swaraj* advocates the morality of Swadeshi.

*Hind Swaraj* is the document wherein Gandhi enunciates ethical principles of a desirable civilization.⁷ 'Read *Hind Swaraj,*' Mahadevan exhorted his readers in the

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² *Gandhi, M.K., Hind Swaraj,* Chapter XIX

³ *Gandhi, M.K., Hind Swaraj,* Chapter XIX.

⁴ John Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* was paraphrased in Gandhi’s words and published as a series of articles under the title of *Sarvodaya* in *Indian Opinion* in 1908. (CWMG vol. 7: 240.) Gandhi in his *Autobiography* describes Ruskin as 'one of the three moderns...who made a deep impress on me'. *Unto This Last* ‘brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation ...I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice’. Polak commended this book to Gandhi who read it on the train journey between Johannesburg and Durban. (*Autobiography,* Part IV, Ch. XVIII)

⁵ The idea of modern civilisation as abetment to human slavery is a recurring meaning of HS. To cite two instances: 'Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion, now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy.' (HS, Ch. VI) and 'To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery.' (HS, Ch. XII)


⁷ Chapters VIII to XII of *Hind Swaraj* is titled similarly.

⁸ Written in Gujarati in ten days, between 13 and 22 November 1909, on board the ship *Kildonan Castle* on Gandhi’s return from Britain to South Africa, after an abortive lobbying mission, the
preface of *Dvija: a Prophet Unheard*, 'if you love the human family and this earth which is our home. Read it if you wish to do your little bit to halt man's mad race towards self-extinction.'

Gandhi, writing in 1939, himself asked the readers to see the booklet as 'an attempt to see beauty in voluntary simplicity, poverty and slowness'.

Critiqued by some as 'a text for its times, not for all time', *Hind Swaraj* has been called 'a very basic document for the study of Gandhi's thought'.

*Hind Swaraj*, 'the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown', encapsulates Gandhi's self experience and learning gained through an intensely involved life of twenty years in South Africa. But at the same time, one, in empathy with Gokhale's celebrated reaction, may christen the thoughts expressed therein as a youthful exuberance of an idealist considering the hard-line attitude of Gandhi towards technological development of the human race.

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literary style of HS is something which Gandhi had perfected in SA where he, as an editor of *Indian Opinion* and the leader of the people, constantly felt the need to make his compatriot understand the motive of his actions. The method he adopted was the form of a dialogue. Earlier, in February 1908, when he worked out a compromise formula with General Smuts of Transvaal, SA, on the law of compulsory registration by giving fingerprints. It eluded the comprehension of many of his compatriots. It was then for the first time he adopted the dialogue format to explain many of the contentious issues in his compromise (CWMG vol.8, 76-86). He would also write letters under his name to self-edited *Indian Opinion* to answer many of the issues that would be raised by the correspondents. All to be better understood—a need that was acutely felt by the emerging leader who also had the benefit of editing a newspaper.

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10 The Unbridgeable Gulf, Harijan, October 14 1939, (CWMG vol.70, 242)


14 Writing to his second son Manilal, then a twelve year old boy, the father Gandhi expounded on the futility of aspiring to study in Britain.

15 Despite their mutual respect for each other, Gandhi calling Gokhale to be his political guru and Gokhale forewarning the country about Gandhi as its future man, the two differed on the vital questions relating to modern technology, western education and industrialisation. The first reaction of Gokhale after he read the HS was mocking rejoinder that the author would change his view in times to come. In order to avoid any backlash to his movement Gandhi found it necessary to reiterate in a letter to Gokhale, 'I do hope that my action in publishing *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati and now the translation in English does not in any way affect the struggle that is going on in the Transvaal. The opinions expressed by me in the booklet are personal to me. Though they have been matured in the course of the struggle, they have nothing to do with it at all, and I trust that you will be able, should any prejudice arise against myself personally or the pamphlet, to keep the merits of the struggle entirely separate from me.' *Letter to G K Gokhale*, May 2 1910, CWMG vol.10: 239.

16 Gandhi was 40, just at the crossroads of middle age, when he wrote HS.
Hindswaraj, in brief, 'severely condemns' the modern civilization as represented by the professionals from medicine, law, politics and institutions such as the modern elected parliament and the industrial society. \(^{17}\) Gandhi's condemnation of the 'parasitical professions' of the modern industrial society is on the plain of morality. The ancient India did not invent machinery as the society then was 'all within bounds' held by its 'moral fiber'. \(^{18}\) But the modern age has unhinged the professions, institutions, and society from the self-cultivated restraints required by traditional morality. Railways 'today accentuate the evil nature of man' as 'good travels at a snail's pace' whereas 'evil has wings' owing to railways acting as 'distributing agency'. \(^{19}\) The lawyers' 'profession teaches immorality; it is exposed to the temptations from which few are saved.' \(^{20}\) The profession of medicine is 'certainly not taken up for the purpose of serving humanity.' \(^{21}\)

During his South African days Gandhi was much concerned about the ways and means by which he could lead expatriate Indian's struggle for dignified living in an alien country. It was this struggle which was central to his thoughts and actions. What ought to be the best method in this struggle to wrest initiative from the oppressing system? His search lead him to an analysis of movements such as English women's struggle to gain political rights known as Suffragette\(^ {22}\); the Irish Sinn Fein, 'exactly our Swadeshi movement'\(^ {23}\); the Hungarian effort to dislodge the Austrian rule; Thoreau's resistance to the American civil government by refusing to pay his taxes as he refused to partake in the 'sin of slavery'. One common element

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\(^{18}\) Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter XIII,

\(^{19}\) Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter IX,

\(^{20}\) Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter XI.

\(^{21}\) Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter XII. In 1928, Gandhi suggests a reform in the profession of law and medicine.

'I am strongly of opinion that lawyers and doctors should not be able to charge any fees but that they should be paid certain fixed sum by the State and the public should receive their services free. (CWMG vol. 36, 84)

\(^{22}\) Gandhi's enthusiasm for women warriors waned when, in 1909, he realized that their movement was 'giving way to impatience'. Of a movement from which he had drawn many an inspiring lessons for his South African comrades, Gandhi noted, 'For a certainty, they will suffer a set-back now'. 'London', *Indian Opinion*, 23-10-1909, (CWMG vol. 9, 433).

found in all these varied struggles was the morality of suffering and sacrifices of the
protagonists. The elements of suffering and sacrifices were 'sword of ethics' in the
hand of Socrates, a 'soldier of truth'. These were also the bedrock of Satyagraha,
Gandhi's own weapon in the moral battle for truth. Sacrifice, Self-denial and
Simplicity were also the cherished values behind the Swadeshi campaign.

Gandhi's practice of paraphrasing important theoretical-inspirational
literature for the Indian Opinion readers gives an insight into his ideological
development. His well directed and purposeful biographical narration of the
personalities from across the globe betrayed his own ambition as well as set high
moral standard for his readers.

24 Gandhi, M.K., Hind Swaraj, Chapter XIII, p69.

Gandhi introduced a series of articles in Indian Opinion titled 'Story of a Soldier of Truth' in
1908 on the trial and rejoinder speech of the Socrates in the city of Athens. Socrates was
condemned to death by poison by the elders for the alleged crime of treachery in his teachings.
Gandhi wrote in his preface of articles that 'we must learn to live and die like Socrates'.
(CWMG vol. 8, 173.

25 There are glorious references to the concepts of sufferings and sacrifices. Gandhi writes: What
is this divine law? It is that one has to suffer pain before enjoying pleasure and that one's true
self-interest consists in the good of all, which means that we should die—suffer—for others. Let
us take a few examples.

When a lump of earth is broken into dust, it mixes with water and nourishes plant life. It is by
sacrificing themselves that plants sustain every kind of animal life. Animals sacrifice
themselves for the good of their progeny. The mother suffers unbearable pain at the time of
child-birth, but feels only happy in that suffering. Both the mother and the father undergo
hardships in bringing up their children. Wherever communities and nations exist, individual
members of those communities or nations have endured hardships for the common good. In the
sixth century B.C., Lord Buddha, after wandering from forest to forest, braving the extremes of
heat and cold and suffering many privations, attained self-realization and spread ideas of
spiritual welfare among the people. Nineteen hundred years ago, Jesus Christ, according to the
Christian belief, dedicated his life to the people and suffered many insults and hardships. The
prophet Mahomed suffered much. People had prepared themselves for an attack on his life. He
paid no heed to it. These great and holy men obeyed the law stated above and brought happiness
to mankind. They did not think of their personal interest but found their own happiness in the
happiness of others. The same thing happens in political matters too. Hampden, Tyler,
Cromwell and other Englishmen were prepared to sacrifice their all for the people and did not
feel concerned at being robbed of all their possessions. Nor did they feel anxious when their
lives were in danger. That is why the British people today rule over a large empire. The rulers of
the Transvaal enjoy power because they suffered great hardships before our very eyes. Mazzini
suffered banishment for the sake of his country. Today he is being revered. He is regarded as the
father of Italian unity. By suffering endless hardships, George Washington made America what
it is today. This again shows that one must pass through suffering before tasting happiness. For
public good, men have to suffer hardships even to the point of death.' 'Divine Law', Indian
Opinion, July 27 1907, CWMG vol. 7: 121-3.

26 Gandhi profiled men of characters who had traversed against all odds to become inspiration for
the human society. Persons such as Maxim Gorky, Mazzini, Elizabeth Fry, Curzon, Lincoln,
Tolstoy, Vidyasagar, Washington, Henry Lawrence, Horatio Nelson, Thomas Munro were few
of those. Their profiles presented rags to riches and fame stories and were worth emulating. The
Mustafa Kamal Pasha\textsuperscript{28} or of Socrates, Gandhi eulogized their twin passion of patriotism and truth. His concern for the moral and physical health of his readers was reflected when he paraphrased \textit{Ethical Religion} by William Salter or wrote a series on naturopathy culled out from various sources\textsuperscript{29}. In 1908, Gandhi wrote a nine-part series titled ‘Sarvodaya’ based on Ruskin’s \textit{Unto This Last} in journal’s Gujarati section.\textsuperscript{30}

In presenting ‘Sarvodaya’, Gandhi’s main thesis was to question the assumption that severed trade and its concomitant practices from human sensitivity or in Ruskin’s phrase, the \textit{Social Affection}. ‘Why the assumption that a trader is always moved by self-interest?’ was the moot point.\textsuperscript{31} If a soldier could sacrifice his life for the country, why a trader can’t be expected to sacrifice his profit motive in the time of famine or national crisis?\textsuperscript{32} Gandhi’s paraphrasing began with the critique of the principle that deemed pursuit of the greatest good of the greatest

\textsuperscript{28} Only those who have heard Mustafa Kamal Pasha can have an idea of the powerful impression he could make on the audience by his command of language. People were delighted to hear him talk, both in private and in public, especially on the conditions in his country. These speeches were prepared with great thought and skill and always went down very well. People looked upon Mustafa Kamal Pasha as their guardian and saviour. The Pasha would tell them what to do and advise them to act with firmness and courage and to adhere unflinchingly to truth and duty. He became well known for these virtues of his. Egypt’s famous Leader – I, Indian Opinion, March 28 1908, (CWMG vol.8, 166)

\textsuperscript{29} General Knowledge about Health, (CWMG vols.11 & 12).

\textsuperscript{30} A series of articles on Ruskin’s book was published in Indian Opinion which is contained in Collected Works volume eight. ‘Sarvodaya’ (CWMG vol. 8).

\textsuperscript{31} ‘Why is it that trade is always associated with unscrupulousness? Even though he has a socially useful function, we take it for granted that his object is to fill his own coffers. Even the laws are so drafted as to enable the merchant to amass wealth with the utmost speed. It is also accepted as a principle that the buyer must offer the lowest possible price and the seller must demand and accept the highest. The trader has thus been encouraged in this habit, yet the public themselves look down on him for his dishonesty. This principle must be abandoned. It is not right that the merchant should look only to self-interest and amass wealth. This is not trade, but robbery. The soldier lays down his life for the state and the trader ought to suffer [a comparable] loss, ought even to lose his life in the interests of society...the merchant’s function is not to make profits but to provide for the people. All this may sound strange. But the really strange thing about the modern age is that it should so sound.’ ‘Savodaya-IV, Indian Opinion, June 6 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 241)

\textsuperscript{32} ‘The soldier’s trade is really, not slaying, but being slain in defence of others. Anyone who enlists as a soldier holds his life at the service of the state. This is true also of the lawyer, the physician and the priest.’ ‘Savodaya-III, Indian Opinion, May 30 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 271)
number as the correct path. Such a principle disregarded the right of the minority while privileging those of the majority. It also did not believe in the inviolability of the moral laws in the pursuit of such an object. Therefore, among the variables that are accounted for in decoding the economic laws, there is no consideration for the factor of Social Affection. The generally held assumption that 'science of economics' is independent of the moral laws, Gandhi argued, was a fallacy. Unlike the physical sciences, Economics is a discipline concerned more with man than material and therefore needs different parameters than is required for the formulation of physical laws. It is important that the wealth is circulated among the people. Its concentration in few individuals signals the sickness of the society as a whole. Wealth creation must take into account not just the technology of production but also the base over which it is created. Gandhi concluded that the generally

33 The reference is to Bentham's maxim of "the greatest good of the greatest number". Gandhi opposed it on moral grounds. Ruskin, too, criticized the construction of a "science" of economics on the Newtonian model from which "social affections" had been wholly abstracted. Ruskin argued that the greatest art or science was that which aroused "the greatest number of the greatest ideas". 'Sarvodaya-I', Indian Opinion, May 16 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 241)

34 'Political economists assert that social affections are to be looked upon as accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but avarice and the desire for progress are constant elements.' 'Sarvodaya-I, Indian Opinion, May 16 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 241)

35 If a gymnast formulated laws on the assumption that man is made only of flesh without a skeleton, those laws might well be valid, but they would not apply to man, since man has a skeleton. In the same way, the laws of political economy may be valid but they cannot apply to man, who is subject to affections. 'Sarvodaya-II, Indian Opinion, May 23 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 258)

36 Man must give up all thought of advancing his interests by following expediency regardless of moral considerations... Justice includes affection. 'Sarvodaya-II, Indian Opinion, May 23 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 258)

37 'The circulation of wealth among a people resembles the circulation of blood in the body.' 'Sarvodaya-VI, Indian Opinion, June 20 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 303) It was an idea that inspired Gandhi's spinning movement as one of the basics on which Khadi movement was built was its capability to distribute wealth among the largest possible people in contrast to mills which concentrated wealth in mill-owners.

38 To lay down directions for the making of money without regard to moral considerations is therefore a pursuit that bespeaks of man's insolence. There is nothing more disgraceful to man than the principle “buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest". 'Sarvodaya-VI, Indian Opinion, June 20 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 305) 'The uncontrolled use of wealth will multiply vices among men and cause starvation; in brief, such wealth will act like a poison. The principle of regulating the circulation of wealth is ignored altogether by economists.' 'Sarvodaya-VIII, Indian Opinion, June 20 1908, (CWMG vol. 8: 337)
accepted principles of economists, if followed, shall make individuals and nations unhappy.\textsuperscript{39}

Gandhi argued that morality has unquestioned validity in all the spheres of life, be it politics, religion, social institutions, human relationships or economic exigencies. Morality, as Gandhi notes of his conviction in autobiography, ‘is the basis of things’ just as truth is substance of all morality.\textsuperscript{40} An act to be moral is not enough to be good in itself. Implicit in the performance of such an action must be ‘good intentions’. But an intentionally good action performed under compulsion or fear is amoral. \textsuperscript{41} In other words, an act to be moral not only should produce good result and be acted with good intention but must be executed by the dictates of conscience irrespective of the consequences. Such morality forms the basis of religion as of other aspects of life and is governed by ethical principles. Indeed, for Gandhi ‘morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms.’\textsuperscript{42} Later, while building Khadi campaign, Gandhi repeatedly asked cloth-merchants and mill-owners to observe morality in manufacturing and trading. Not just spurious Khadi had invaded the niche market created by national campaign, but merchants took to profiting by selling mill-textile embossed with Gandhi’s mug-shot. Letters poured in from everywhere informing Gandhi of sale of foreign or mill cloth disguised as Khadi.

\textsuperscript{39} 'That nation is wealthy which is moral...It is wrong normally for one nation to rule over another. British rule in India is an evil but we need not believe that any very great advantage would accrue to the Indians if the British were to leave India. The reason why they rule over us is to be found in ourselves; that reason is our disunity, our immorality and our ignorance...Both those who manufacture gun-powder and those who fall victims to it suffer in consequence...Accumulation of gold and silver will not bring swarajya.' Savodaya-IX, Indian Opinion, July 18 1908, CWMG vol. 8: 371-5. In an article written at London, Gandhi castigated the practice of adulterating food for profit. ‘The conclusion to be drawn is that the producers have their eyes only on profit and never care what harm they do to people. These very men then donate a part of their ill-gotten wealth to public causes and so win respect for themselves. They earn reputation as good and virtuous men. In this civilization, therefore, immorality presents itself as morality.’ Civilization or Barbarism? Indian Opinion, CWMG vol.9: 424.

\textsuperscript{40} Autobiography, Part I, Chapter X, (CWMG vol.39, 33).

\textsuperscript{41} Gandhi summarized, into Gujarati, Ethical Religion by William MacIntyre Salter, the founder of the Society for Ethical culture, Chicago and published in a series of eight articles in the Gujarati column of Indian Opinion in 1907.

\textsuperscript{42} AK Dasgupta, p4
Gandhi wrote 'beware of fine cloth'. 'When the entire system of government is based on fraud, what else can we expect from people?'

As stated above, Hindswaraj is crystallization of Gandhi’s many faceted ideological development in South Africa. This crystallization found further expression in shaping Gandhi’s conviction on non-violence. An application of the principle of non-violence in the field of economics meant adherence to the belief in non-hoarding. Hoarding of things not needed amounted to stealing from the socio-economic pool and thereby spread inequality. He argued for renunciation of consumption, and contentment through minimal of things. Unnecessary consumption brought violence against fellow being. But renunciation, actuated by the ideal of non violence, produce compassion. A compassionate person shall never entertain toxic emotions such as to hoard or to earn profit out of other’s misery. Austerities coupled with self-control spur one to gain real greatness, beyond the transience of time. It was with these principles, exampled in person, that Gandhi later approached his country people, be they mill-owners, merchants, middle class, or bureaucracy.

In a remarkably cogent speech delivered to the Christian missionaries in Madras, particularly noted for the number of quotable quotes that it contains, Gandhi attempted the definition of Swadeshi. It was the first major laying down-from sporadic to specific- of his thoughts on the subject. ‘Swadeshi’, the written speech

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43 Notes: How to Kill Swadeshi? YOUNG INDIA, September 1 1921, (CWMG vol.21, 33) also My notes: How to Guard Against Being Cheated?, Navajivan, September 7 1921, (CWMG vol.21.52)

44 Hindswaraj had controversial re-birth during the confrontational months of Non-cooperation movement. His Empire opponents tried to use the booklet and its portrayal of Swaraj as a wedge to divide the precariously built national unity. (CWMG vol.19: 79) Gandhi was categorical and minced no word in writing and speaking rejoinder. (CWMG vol.19: 78,103, 169, 178) ‘I want to make it clear that I am no hater of the West. I am thankful to the West for many a thing I have learnt from Western literature. What is that modern civilization? It is the worship of the material, it is the worship of the brute in us—it is unadulterated materialism, and modern civilization is nothing if it does not think at every step of the triumph of material civilization.’ (CWMG vol. 19: 266)


46 Even while in South Africa, Gandhi was much concerned with the principle of Swadeshi. His meaning of Swadeshi was of larger dimension. ‘Swadeshi carries a great and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one’s own country. That meaning is certainly there in swadeshi. Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength.’ ‘New Year’, Indian Opinion, January 1 1909, CWMG vol. 9: 118.
read, 'is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.' The principle applied to all the segments of life be it religion, economics or indigenous political and social institutions. Thus defined, onus for its ceaseless application lay on the morality of self rather than the external machinery of governance. And for the self to be awake to its application as well as corrosive elements that with time accumulate, 'an ever-increasing vigilance and searching self-examination' is required.

Much before Gandhi, in 1870s, Swadeshi, as a term, had found itself in vogue, in the writings of Gopal Hari Deshmukh, a Maharashtrian reformer, known by his pen name of 'Lokhitwadi'. Then, during the anti-partition agitation in Bengal, it made its appearance as a political slogan. The real credit, however, for making Swadeshi a part of the political agenda goes to Gandhi. He, by his writings and speeches, invested it with religious, political, and economic meanings. He exhorted


48 Convinced that only Swadeshi could bring salvation of Indian poverty, he conceived it as a religious principle to be followed by all' ('Speech at Gujarat Political Conference-I', 3 November 1917, CWMG, vol. 14, pp. 48-66). Simultaneously he also framed the Swadeshi vows to fortify the religious resolve. In Gandhi's conception vows were necessary as a man was under so strong a temptation to fall, and Nature herself had made it so very easy for him to indulge in self-deception, that even a vigilant person, if he was weak, or if his abstinence lacked the genuine spirit of renunciation, was sure to fall. To his countrymen, therefore, he extolled, 'Anything less than inflexible determination can not be called a vow' ('The Swadeshi Yow-l', 8 April 1919, The Bombay Chronicle, CWMG vol. 15, p.195). The Swadeshi vow was designed to impart 'stability, ballast and firmness to one's character' ('The Efficacy of Vows', Young India, 22 August 1929, CWMG, vol. XLI, p.272). Framing of vows were the product of Gandhi's unique understanding of the Indian condition.

He believed that India, contrary to the material West, was a country swathed with religious fervour. 'India alone is the land of karma and the rest is the land of bhoga.' ('Speech at Gujarat Political Conference-I', 3 November 1917, CWMG, vol. 14, p.48) Properly channelled, religious fervour could bring about positive and constructive turnaround of the Indian condition. 'Be that as it may, this is the maxim of life which I have accepted, namely, that no work done by any man, no matter how great he is, will really prosper unless he has religious backing.' ('Speech on "Ashram Vows" at Y.M.C.A., Madras', 16 February 1916, CWMG, vol. 13, p. 226.) In his conception, religion and politics led a symbiotic existence. 'The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried'. Religion, that he constantly referred to, was not that which fomented sectarianism, neither did it spring from the scriptural readings. 'It is a thing which is not alien to us, but it is a thing which has to be evolved out of us. It is always within us, with some consciously so, with others, quite unconsciously. But it is there; and whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done if we want to do anything in the right manner and anything that is going to persist.' (Ibid). Once this religious sense gets awakened, people's thoughts undergo instant revolution. Vows are embodiment of awakened religious sense. If religion acts as reservoir of strength then vows help in fortifying the resolve.

49 Speech at Gurukul Anniversary, (CWMG vol.13, 262).
‘every man, woman and, child’, ‘from the Viceroy down to the sweeper’, to realize that it is through Swadeshi that India would get Swaraj.

Gandhi’s Swadeshi, like his other two ideological contributions of Swaraj and Satyagraha, has specific Gandhian semiotic. ‘The Bengal agitation’, Green in his New Age biography deduces, ‘was something for Gandhi to learn from, when he began his own agitation in India a decade later.’ Green goes on to say that Gandhi followed many a lead offered by the anti-partition movement in the first decade of the century, ‘for instance in dramatizing the issue of foreign imports, which he and the Bengalis fought with the cry of “Swadeshi,” homemade.’ However, the point that the Green’s allusion misses is that the Gandhi’s Swadeshi in its ideological content was distinct from its earlier avatar. In 1905, anti partition agitation had given a spurt to the boycott of British goods but at the same time had been encouraging to Indian industrial productions. Hindswaraj wishes ‘If Bengal had proclaimed a boycott of all machine-made goods, it would have been much better.’ Swadeshi of Gandhi’s conception gradually evolved to mean primarily an encouragement to struggling village industries.

Swadeshi emerged from an understanding that there was an embargo on the free transcontinental migration of people as walls of protection began to be erected by the western countries along their national boundaries as well as colonies they controlled. Only human movement that was allowed, as a policy or surreptitiously,
was either as slave or indenture laborers bound by mitigating conditionality. Gandhi perhaps saw that on the one hand cross country human movement in search of economic benefit was sought to be regulated and restrained by the policies of self-interest and by the pernicious ideologies of race and apartheid. On the other hand free flow of trade was imposed upon the colonies to the destruction of native economy owing to the inundation of cheap industrially produced goods. If there is unrestricted flow of wealth to the metropolis from the colony then there is only, in the picturesque but precise phrase of Noaroji, 'Drain of Wealth'. His struggle in South Africa was to fight this protectionist policies and laws of the western countries. It were such as to claim free trade to the advantage of the newly industrialized countries but embargo on the free human movement especially inward migration from poor countries or their own colonies.

'The condition of Indians in South Africa is pitiable. We go out to distant lands to make money...We find that going abroad does us more harm than good, or does not profit us as much as it ought to.' Earlier, like himself, Gandhi had taken along many of his young relatives to South Africa. 'I believed then that enterprising youths who could not find an opening in the country should emigrate to other lands.' In South Africa, he found that the Dravida land was sending out the largest number of emigrants to a life of servility and exile. Restoration of the charkha automatically solved the difficult problem of enforced emigration. Gandhi's struggle in South Africa was directed as much against the globalization of capital as against the rich countries' threat to restrict the movement of labour to the boundaries of nation-state. But later the plight of indentured laborers made him revise his

54 'Sarvodaya-I', Indian Opinion, CWMG vol.8: 240.
56 Notes: Tamil Sister Again, YOUNG INDIA, August 25 1921, CWMG vol.21: 11.
57 'India could not be expected to consider the convenience of the colonies at her own expense nor could the Government of India prevent free Indian emigration if there were Indians who wanted to go to any of the colonies with a view to bettering their own position. From British Guiana there have been no complaints of ill-treatment of its indentured Indians. In Fiji, too, there are probably no glaring inequalities in law. The question for us, however, to consider is: do we want Indian labour to go to these colonies, and, if we do, are the terms such as would make the Indians morally and materially better? Emigration cannot solve the problem of Indian poverty. The causes are too deep and widespread to be solved by a scheme of emigration no matter how ambitious it may be. I would not be a party to sending a single woman to be exposed to a life of shame. Until the relations become normal and natural it is not proper to encourage or countenance even free emigration to these colonies.' (17, 9) Then again to V S Srinivasa Sastri,
opinion on immigration and led a movement against it.\textsuperscript{58} In it also lay inspiration for Swadeshi.

Gandhi analyzed India's poverty.\textsuperscript{59} It led him to fix responsibility and demand remedial measures from those he held responsible. Indians' departure from the principle of Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life, Gandhi concluded, was the chief cause of her abject poverty. It was therefore imperative of consuming class to shun foreign produce and adopt Swadeshi and that too with 'religious devotion'.\textsuperscript{60} Gandhi's first emphatic point was to narrow down the concept of Swadeshi to mean adopting exclusion in the matter of one's clothing needs alone.\textsuperscript{61} His narrowing of the Swadeshi creed was pragmatic given the indigenous manufacturing context. Once Swadeshi began to be identified with the clothes alone, its campaign went through series of phases. In the beginning, during the first phase, it was clothes produced within the national boundary. In Second stage an understanding developed that clothes woven in Indian mills or on handlooms from out of foreign yarn benefitted the country insignificantly and therefore was to be discouraged. Third stage was when proponents believed that handloom clothe woven out of mill yarn was Swadeshi. The fourth stage gave birth to what came to be called as Khadi; only

Gandhi wrote: 'I feel that we cannot countenance any emigration at the present moment. It is like good milk added to bad milk also going bad. The environment in Fiji and British Guiana is reeking with the odour of indentured labour.' (\textit{17, 11})

Indenture or Slavery? indenture to be a state bordering on slavery; Indenture is indeed a state of semi-slavery. In the countries to which they emigrate, they receive no moral or religious education. Most of them are unmarried. On every ship carrying indentured labourers, there is provision for taking women to the extent of 40 per cent. Some of these are women of ill fame. They do not, as a rule, enter into a marriage alliance. In this state of affairs, even if 20 per cent of the men wish to marry, they cannot. Going to lands so far away, they get into the habit of drinking. Women, who in India would never touch wine, are sometimes found lying dead-drunk on the roads. After all this degradation, the profit which they point to is that the economic condition of these people improves. Everyone will admit that even though we may stand to gain economically by selling our souls, we ought not to do so. (CWMG vol.13: 147)

In 1814, two-crores of rupees worth of Khadi was exported from Calcutta alone. In 1914, India imported sixty-six crores of rupees worth of piece-goods. (CWMG vol. 24: 263) 'Before subjection to British rule, India produced finest of fabrics without any mills and its produce competed favourably worldwide and sold at premium. It was only after the establishment of the East India Company that foul and unfair means were adopted to crush the industry that was the sole occupation of the weaver population and supplementary occupation to women of the country' (CWMG vol.19: 147). Now Swadeshi was the only remedy.

Message on Opening of Swadeshi Store, November 14 1918, (CWMG vol.15, 62)

'Swadeshi means even distribution of wealth from an occupation next in importance only to agriculture. It supplements agriculture and therefore automatically assists materially to solve the problem of our growing poverty.' 'Swadeshi', \textit{YOUNG INDIA}, April 21 1920, CWMG vol. 17: 331.
clothes hand-woven out of hand-spun yarn constituted true Swadeshi clothes. He was aware of India's dilapidated state of industrial environment and therefore expected and cajoled people to bear with inconveniences till the time industrial resurgence began. And therefore for him it was not just the adoption of foreign cloth but also the foreign fashion that was equally abrasive to the principle of Swadeshi.

Swadeshi had positive cultural connotation and principally differed from Boycott, subscribed by many. Boycott, as understood by Gandhi, was a sort of punishment, while the Swadeshi was a religious duty. Therefore he abhorred the retaliatory boycott campaign against the Empire goods. It was ineffective, demonstrative of impotent rage and therefore wastage of country's constructive energy, he argued. Further, the imported Empire goods were consumed by the rich of the Indian society who, according to Gandhi, would never accede to any such boycott programme. The principle of boycotting the Empire goods was derived from the conflict of interest that afflicted India-England economic relationship. Instead, Gandhi focused on boycott of all foreign cloth and their replacement with Khadi. It sterilized all foreign interests. 'Not before the foreign piece-goods trade is entirely replaced by homespun will the bleeding process cease.'

Notes: Tamil Sister Again, YOUNG INDIA, August 25 1921, (CWMG vol.21,11)

Gandhi would not even approve Bihar procuring its clothing needs from Bombay. That was not Swadeshi. It was Swadeshi only when Indians begin to use cloth produced from their own locality. 'In days gone by we used to do like this and were not helpless.' India must not baulk at using locally produce clothes even when its quality was not comparable to the imported. If she did so her practice would go against Swadeshi dharma. 'Coarse cloth is pure and sacred.' (CWMG vol.19: 78) Swadeshi meant 'you look after your needs'. 'My patriotism tells me that I must first make my own home independent, then my town and then my province. Mill-cloth is for the poor, whom my message cannot reach. Only if it is reserved exclusively for them will mill-owners behave worthily. For such people, of course, there is no choice but to use mill-cloth unless they produce their requirements locally.' (CWMG vol.20:125) 'The science which tells us that America's need is our opportunity is a science not for men but for monsters. Swaraj is nothing but shaking ourselves free from the hold of this idea.' (CWMG vol. 21: 270)

Speech at Gurukul Anniversary, March 20 1916, (CWMG vol.13,261)

Speech at Choupatty, Bombay, April 6 1919, (CWMG vol.15, 183)

Empire Goods Boycott, YOUNG INDIA, May 15 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 53), Boycott Foreign Cloth, YOUNG INDIA, 22 May 1924, (CWMG vol.24.99)

Is it Non-co-operation? YOUNG INDIA, May 8 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 14)
Gandhi’s advocacy for creating an indigenous craft-based manufacturing capacity to replace imported clothes was supported by arguments that ranged from economics to ethics. Gandhi’s most portent argument came from the womb of history: a history written by Dadabhai Noroaji and R C Dutt. With their incisive analysis, these two had set a whole generation of Indians thinking on the issues of economic cost of the British imperialism. Gandhi acknowledged their contribution in shaping his thoughts in Hind Swaraj. Gandhi’s second set of arguments were drawn from his experiences borne out of travels and sporadic engagements. That made him to firmly invest into Charkha the potency that was required to bring about a turnaround in the Indian situation.

The advocates of the Charkha maintained that hand-spinning was the only supplementary industry possible and suitable in India’s specific context, and that it afforded the simplest and quickest means of utilizing exiting idle manpower. Gandhi, the chief proponent of the ideology, summarized its advantages as follows: (i) It is immediately practicable, because (a) it does not require any capital or costly implements to put it into operation; both the raw material and the implements for working it can be cheaply and locally obtained; (b) it does not require any higher degree of skill or intelligence than the ignorant and poverty stricken masses of India possess; (c) it requires so little physical exertion that even little children and old men can practice it and so contribute their mite to the family fund; (d) it does not require the ground to be prepared for its introduction afresh as the spinning tradition is still alive among the people. (ii) It is universal and permanent as, next to food, yarn alone can be sure of always commanding an unlimited and ready market at the very doorstep of the worker, and thus it ensures a steady regular income to the impoverished agriculturist. (iii) It is independent of monsoon conditions and so can be carried on even during famine times. (iv) It is not opposed to the religious or social susceptibilities of the people. (v) It provides a most perfect and ready means of fighting famine. (vi) It carries work to the very cottage of the peasant and thus prevents the disintegration of the family under economic distress. (vii) It alone can restore some of the benefits of the village communities of India ruined by imperialist policies. (viii) It is the backbone as much of the hand-weaver as of the agriculturist, as it alone can provide a permanent and stable basis for the hand-loom industry which at present is supporting from eight to ten million people and supplies about
one-third of the clothing requirements of India (ix) Its revival would give a fillip to a host of cognate and allied village occupations and thus rescue the villages from the state of decay into which they have fallen. (x) It alone can ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among the millions of inhabitants of India. (xi) It alone effectively solves the problem of unemployment, not only the partial unemployment of the agriculturist, but of the educated youth aimlessly wandering in search of occupation.68

When Gandhi arrived, each Indian was said to have been paying rupees two for India’s import of clothes. While on one hand India’s multitude suffered from dearth and death owing to lack of earning opportunities, every year she imported her clothing needs worth rupees sixty crores. That practically meant for a country of 30 crores population that every person, irrespective of one’s capacity and even people who stalked half-nakedly, was paying rupee two annually.69 This was a time when annual/per-capita income of Indians hovered around rupees 20 (for the year 1868) as was estimated by D. Naoroji.70 This was unofficial.71 Basing his calculation on the prices of 1946-47, A Heston, draws a decadal per-capita income chart from 1871 to 1946.72 In the 77 years for which figures are given India witnessed an increase of per-capita income by rupees 44 [1871: 133.6; 1946: 177.4]. It is a notorious fact that the figures for per-capita incomes are drawn to serve vested purposes. According to Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, the per-capita income at the beginning of the century was 30 [base year 1897-8].73 These however are only a gross average income, not the actual income of the overwhelming majority. Economists Shah and


69 Speech at Women's Meeting, Bombay, May 8 1919, (CWMG vol.15,291)

70 RC Dutt, India Today , p30

71 The Simon Commission in its official report quoted a highly inflated figure for the same. According to the report, published in 1930 but that based its calculation on the prices of 1921-22, the per-capita income was about rupees 116. That figure was not only fallacious but misleading too given its base of post-war period, a decade prior to report writing. The prices immediately in the post-war period had witnessed a boom which was clearly not the case afterwards. Later, agricultural prices too collapsed bringing further hardship.


73 RC Dutt, India Today, p30; also quoted by Gandhi in a speech to Rotary Club (CWMG vol.28, 82)
Khambata in their 'Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India' (1924) showed that 1 percent of the population got one-third of the national income, while 60 percent of the population got 30 percent of the income. This meant that for the 60 percent or majority of the population any gross figure of the average national income per head must be exactly halved to represent what they actually got. Then the Lord Curzon's per capita income figure of 30 becomes 15. Thereby, it could be safely concluded that Indians in Lord Curzon's time received a daily income of 0.04 paisa. That was in the beginning of the century. In 1921, taking the base year of 1946-7, and drawing from A Heston, the daily income of the majority of Indians came to 0.20 paisa. Now, even that too is a figure of optimism. From the figures of per-capita one has to deduct the exorbitant Home Charges that were being siphoned off every year from India. While the majority of Indians earned daily anything between 0.04 to 0.20 paisa, only through the import of cloths they were made to pay rupees two every year.

What Gandhi was hinting at was this abysmally low income of Indians.

Another fact that came to his notice was increasing idleness of the rural population. People in the rural sector were earlier dependent on non-farm activities such as spinning to earn livelihood during the agriculturally lean period of four to six months following July to December. Spinning was the supplementary occupation for the millions. This mechanism was destroyed by the industrialism imported by the British. While weavers as an artisan class greatly suffered, the spinning as a hereditary occupation was completely destroyed. Swadeshi therefore was a quest for a subsidiary industry to fill the void of inactivity and consequent

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74 This is quoted in Dutt, p31

75 In 1916, continuing his nation-wide self-acquainting tour, Gandhi visited Puri, the temple town of Orissa. 'I was prepared to see skeletons in Orissa but not to the extent I did', he wrote exactly five years after that visit. Men, women and children, 'merely skin and bone' and yet 'ablest of the starving' lined the road with haunted look and pathetic cries. 'I understood that the meaning of Swaraj to many was cheap food and clothing—the latter not so much. A rag sufficed to cover their lower limbs.' (19,563) Consequence of this understanding was comprehension of the cause of the recurring phenomenon of famines. Wives and female relatives of Weavers at Dohad in Gujarat had fallen to earn enough to meet their family's needs. It was because the traditional occupation in which their men had expertise in had dried up and were unable to employ themselves gainfully. (CWMG vol.16: 129)

76 Gandhi advocated his stand for supplementary work through reiterating the proverb, "an idle man ruins himself and his country". CWMG vol. 19: 131.
poverty. Spinning yarn was one such simple, universal and 'hereditary' industry for the millions at the margin of starvation and nakedness. It not just provided employment to ideal and incapacitated man and woman, but also withheld the flow of money out of the country.\textsuperscript{77} In the melting plains of Madras and Andhra, Gandhi could imagine no industry so helpful as the gentle-moving charkha.\textsuperscript{78} In Bihar, Orissa and such other provinces, the spinning-wheel which yielded a daily wage of two annas was a sufficient means of livelihood for any person.\textsuperscript{79}

Installation of new textile mills was not the solution. The gestation period of mills was long and scarcity in clothes demanded immediate attention. Installation of imported mill-plants made the country dependent on foreign manufacturers. Further, as mills' weaving capacity was greater than its capacity for spinning, the consumption of mill-yarn for handloom constrained their cloth-production.\textsuperscript{80} In contrast, hand spinning and weaving were short in gestation, required little capital investment and a commonsensical expertise. Moreover, as a report of the Industrial Commission observed, one-third of the country's cloth requirement could be produced through hand-weaving.\textsuperscript{81} Spinning was the subsidiary occupation whose introduction into India's homes would wean specter of starvation from their lives.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{77} Speech at Women's Meeting, Godra, August 14 1919, (CWMG vol.16,29)

\textsuperscript{78} 'Dravida land is responsible for sending out the largest number of emigrants to a life of servility and exile. Restoration of the charkha automatically solves the difficult problem of enforced emigration.' Notes: Tamil Sister Again, \textit{YOUNG INDIA}, August 25 1921, (CWMG vol.21, 11)

\textsuperscript{79} My Notes: Bihar Tour, \textit{Navajivan}, August 21 192, (CWMG vol.21,3)

\textsuperscript{80} 'The cloth which our cotton mills produce is not enough for India's needs and the mills are not in a position to increase the production of cloth in the immediate future. Their weaving capacity is greater than their spinning capacity. If, therefore, we use mill-yarn for handloom cloth, it will mean that the mills will produce less correspondingly and not that there will be an increase in the total production of cloth. The result will be large imports, not of cloth, but of yarn.' 'Pure Swadeshi', \textit{Navajivan}, July 11 1920, (CWMG vol.18, 32)

\textsuperscript{81} 'The more I have studied the economics of India, the more I have listened to the mill-owners of India, the more convinced I have become that until we introduce the spinning-wheel in every home of India, the economic salvation and freedom of India is an impossibility. Go to any mill-owner you like, he will tell you that it will require fifty years if India is to become self-contained, so far as cloth supplies are concerned, if she has to depend upon her mills alone. And let me supplement the information by telling you that today hundreds and thousands of weavers are weaving and are able to weave homespun yarn, but they have to fall back upon foreign yarn because mills cannot supply them.' 'Speech at Mirzapur Park', Calcutta, January 23 1921, (CWMG vol.19,271)

\textsuperscript{82} 'Pure Swadeshi', \textit{Navajivan}, July 11 1920, (CWMG vol.18, 33)
In A Deccan Village observed in his treatise that India’s growing rural pauperization was largely due to the destruction of handlooms which hitherto had complemented agricultural occupation.\(^8^3\)

Cheap mill clothes were for the poor. While the poor use mill-made clothes, the affording class should limit their needs to hand-spun and hand-woven cloth alone. That helped the poor parched on the edge of starvation.\(^8^4\) Gandhi saw the hand-spinning and hand-weaving as ‘automatic famine insurance’.\(^8^5\) When Orissa was afflicted with debilitating famine Gandhi sent a message to people providing relief to the victims. ‘Make Utkal the store-house of Khaddar for the rest of India’.\(^8^6\) To cover and to feed the body was duel purpose argument in favour of Khadi.

Spinning Wheel was not proposed for those who were employed in more remunerative occupation. Spinning wheel helped economically well-off Indians to forge ‘moral bond’ with rural and famished masses. Spinning Wheel was not said to be sole salvation for starving masses. It was supplementary occupation for the peasantry. Spinning Wheel was only an immediate remedy to growing poverty of masses. It did not preclude the possibility of any foray into agricultural improvement or any other mass-employment occupation. Spinning wheel movement was prelude to such endeavours. In the limited space that a colonial state provided, spinning wheel was the contemporary answer. But if spinning was suitable supplementary industry for India it might not be the same for all other nation. Burma, for instance, was told by Gandhi to search for a Burmese supplementary industry to agriculture and revive that lost industry pending full Swaraj.\(^8^7\)

Spinning wheel was preferred to Handloom. The wheel was cheaper, required little expertise, had greater potential to distribute national wealth among the largest possible number of famished masses. In comparison, then handloom had less

\(^8^3\) ‘Circular Letter for Funds For Ashram’, On or After July 3\(^{rd}\) 1917, (CWMG vol.13,461)
\(^8^4\) ‘Khadi is a more useful and superior cloth. It is more beautiful than calico because it has a soul in it. We can say that a piece of khadi has a personality of its own, if personality can be attributed to cloth.’ ‘Uses of Khadi’, Navajivan, April 25 1920, (CWMG vol.17,339)
\(^8^5\) ‘Letter to PS to Governor’, Bombay, August 25 1919, (CWMG vol.16,61)
\(^8^6\) ‘Message to Utkal’, December 30 1921, (CWMG vol.22,121)
potential on all fronts. Handloom weaving because of its potential to pay higher wages was said to be better proposition. It was said that handloom had survived the onslaught of mill-competition and therefore deserved support. However, hand-weaving was never a universal occupation in India. It was a specialized occupation requiring suitable skills. It came in the category of sole and independent occupation. Hand-weaving and mill-weaving were not complementary propositions. They were mutually antagonistic, the tendency of weaving mills, like all machinery, always being to displace the product of the hand. The spinning-wheel appeared to Gandhi to be the only foundation on which satisfactory village life could be constructed. It was the centre round which alone it was possible to build up village reorganization. 'I am not against the handloom', Gandhi said. 'It is a great and thriving cottage industry. It will progress automatically if the spinning wheel succeeds. It is bound to die if the wheel fails.'

With Charkha Gandhi wanted to wage a big fight against industrialism and remedy its many 'evils'. 'I am hoping in faith that the Charkha will be universal in India, and that it will correct many evils of industrialism.' Gandhi said that Khadi would in part rebuild the villages that were destroyed by modern industrialism. Khadi represented dharmik political economy, whereas industrialism was rakshasik or Satanic economics. For it stood for the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. The Khadi movement stood for even distribution of wealth. 'I am going to do my best to prevent this Satanic economics from destroying us.'

Gandhi dissented from Adam Smith who considered the human element a disturbing factor in the study of economic phenomena. He had argued: '...it is this 'human element' on which the entire economics of Khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's 'pure economic motive', constitutes the 'disturbing factor' that has got to be overcome. ...Debasing of quality, adulteration, pandering to the baser tastes of humanity, are current staple in commercialised production; they have no place in Khadi, nor has the principle of highest profit and lowest wages any place in Khadi.' The spinner is 'not a machine... the art in Khadi appeals first to the

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89 'Interview to the Press', November 13 1927, CWMG vol.35, 231.
90 'Speech at Public Meeting', Davangere, August 12 1927, CWMG vol.34, 336.
It was never meant to displace existing employment. ‘Give me a thing’, he said, ‘which would increase the daily income of the millions of our impoverished people more than the spinning wheel, and I should gladly give up the spinning wheel’.  

Gandhi underlined the purpose behind Khadi movement. One of its purposes was proper distribution of national wealth. It came to be understood in the intellectual circle that the movement aimed at ending the machine age. Gandhi though was never direct in attacking mills. ‘With the success of Khadi the supremacy of the mill will surely end.’

Gandhi’s opposition to industrialism was borne out of his civilizational concern: ‘The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.’

But boycott of foreign clothes could fuel cloth famine as India by herself did not produce enough clothes to meet all her requirements. By making people wear only Khadi Gandhi desired a revolution in decentralized spinning and through that to distribute rather than concentrate wealth in few mill-owners. Gandhi crafted his arguments for hand-spinning and hand-weaving under the pronounced inability of Indian mills to meet India’s immediate clothing needs. From industry calculation, any further boost in their capacity was also not immediately possible. But to offset any immediate fear of cloth famine, Gandhi exhorted people to take to minimal of clothing—man to remain satisfied with mere loin cloth and woman just enough to satisfy the sense of modesty—as an example of ‘self-denial and honesty’.

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91 ‘Interview to Khadi Workers’, on or before August 24 1934, CWMG vol.58, 353-4.
92 ‘Discussion with Dodd’, September 4 1934, CWMG vol. 58, 401.
93 Questions of a Graduate, Navajivan, July 15 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 59)
94 Discussion with a Capitalist, Before December 20 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 243)
95 Pure Swadeshi, Navajivan, July 11 1920, (CWMG vol.18, 32)
96 The Swadeshi Vow-II, April 8 1919, (CWMG vol.15, 199)
Gandhi faced vociferous criticism to his doctrine of reviving the 'rusticated spinning wheel'.\(^97\) It was said that India's limited manufacturing base incapacitate it from adopting Swadeshi for its clothing needs. On the other hand, to many, it had seemed to be a depravedly selfish principle. There was much discord even with in the nationalist circle. *The Servants of India*, a journal brought out by Gokhale's Society, was constantly censorious of and sniping at Gandhi's Khadi arguments. Gandhi was at pains to ask for 'seriousness and accuracy of information' from the journal while writing on Khadi.\(^98\) In an article titled 'The Mists' Gandhi pleaded with the editors to disregard the seeming negativity in the non-co-operation and 'call the movement by any other name. Call it 'Swadeshi and Temperance'.\(^99\)

One of the oft-repeated criticism that found many takers was Gandhi's unstinted faith in the capability of the spinning-wheel to win Swaraj. 'It is like running after a mirage', some had exasperatedly contended.\(^100\) For Gandhi, a nation spinning with purpose, resolve and as a duty had a political ramification for the country's destiny of Swaraj. For many in intelligentsia, however, relation was not so obvious. A nationwide acceptance of spinning wheel may bring in cloth sufficiency and offset the need of import. But how would it change the claimants of power? Britain might not be wholly dependent on textile for continuing in India? Its fulcrum of interest could shift.\(^101\) Arguments were many but most were pinned intellectually.

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\(^97\) 'I know that there are friends who laugh at this attempt to revive this great art. They remind me that in these days of mills, only a lunatic can hope to succeed in reviving the rusticated spinning-wheel.' *The Music of the Spinning Wheel*, YI, July 21 1920, (CWMG vol.18,71)

\(^98\) 'I do expect *The Servant of India* to treat a serious subject with seriousness and accuracy of information.' *Hand-Spinning Again*, YOUNG INDIA, February 16 1921, (CWMG vol.19,364)

\(^99\) 'Swadeshi propaganda in its intensive and exclusive form had to come and it has come in its order. It was, and is, part of the non-co-operation programme. It is the biggest, the safest, and the surest part. It had to see that it was not even so much the military drain as the loss of this supplementary industry that sapped India's vitality and made famines an ever-recurring event in Indian life. It is a movement to place our relations on a pure basis, to define them in a manner consistent with our self-respect and dignity.' *The Mists*, YOUNG INDIA, April 20 1921, (CWMG vol.20,16)

\(^100\) Some Doubts, Navajivan, April 24 1921, (CWMG vol.20,31)

\(^101\) Gandhi was asked by a correspondent: 'The spinning-wheel can perhaps make up self reliant, can even help us to earn a living comfortably, but it passes my understanding how it can help us to win political power. The spinning-wheel was there in Clive's time and still we lost our freedom. That is to say, an end to Lancashire's interests does not mean the end of all the interests of England. Hence, even if foreign cloth ceases to be imported, England will still posses substantial vested interests in India.' *My Notes: Swaraj through Spinning Wheel*, Navajivan, May 8 1921, (CWMG vol.20,79)
Some questioned Gandhi's overwhelming advocacy of the spinning in complete disregard of other similar but more accomplishing industry. If the goal was to achieve self-sufficiency in India's clothing needs, the critics said, why not increase the number of weaving looms. It was said that India exported yarn spun in its textile mills. If this yarn was to be nationally used what the most would be required was to increase the number and capacity of hand-loom to usher an era of national sufficiency in cloth. Gandhi found something amiss in the argument. The number of hand-loom in India surpassed the capacity of the power-loom but unfortunately they mostly wove foreign yarn; hand-weaving was a live vocation unlike the hand-spinning which was on its last throes and therefore needed no special emphasis; profit was bigger than patriotism and therefore it was impossible to convince the mill-owners to forego the larger profit that they accrued by exporting their mill-yarn. But the most important cause of the movement for the hand-spinning was its capacity to distribute the national wealth to the largest and most famished masses of the country. India's poverty was the fact borne out of the destruction of a supplementary occupation for a largely agricultural population. Gandhi saw in national plying of Charkha a goal of self-sufficiency in cloth. He was however clear that it was just one goal and not the goal. More important was the aspect of providing solution to India's poverty. An occupation that could be simply comprehended by the illiterate masses, an occupation that was embedded in the societal memory, an occupation that could decentralize national wealth, and an occupation which can contribute to the national confidence could only be spinning.

It was because of this factor that Gandhi was not very enthusiastic about his advocacy of Indian textile mills. That gave rise to many misgivings about his attitude. He was accused of harbouring anti-industrial fads. But he was most reluctant to accept the tag. There was no need to boycott Indian mills as the hand spinning supplemented their production and did not compete with them. But yes, he advocated hand spinning and wearing of Khadi as his prime concern was the majority of Indians living in rural area. Indian mills would not solved India's curse of poverty; they would only accentuate it. He averred that his opposition to machinery was nothing to do with his pronounced antipathy to modern western civilization. 'Here the question of West and East does not arise.' He was against concentration of manufacture of cloth in the hands of few. Just as he would oppose the idea of eating in hotels to the banishment of the home cookery. 'Millions of people in India used to occupy themselves usefully and honourably at least eight
hours per day. Today the most tragic result of the British rule has been— unintended by the British people I admit—that over 20 millions of the people of India remain in enforced idleness for six months in the year.  

Through hand-spinning and hand-weaving, Indians could have national self sufficiency for their clothing needs. It was neither impossible nor a distant possibility. India did manufacture her needs just a century ago. But how about the material condition that had metamorphosed in the interim period, hadn't that affected India's present capacity? For Gandhi it was more an apology for mental state rather than changed material condition. 'It is not as though hands, nor is it as if all the hours that the nation devoted to manufacturing cloth and spinning yarn, are now utilized to any other or better purpose. The hours are there unutilized and the hands as well.' Gandhi envisioned that the concentration of manufacture under the factory system could equally and effectively be replaced for the purpose of meeting the needs of the nation by hand-spinning on an extensive scale in the homes and cottages of the people. It was the question of extensive manufacture through the agency of hand-spinning and hand-weaving in rural areas rather than intensive manufacture under the factory system. During the transitional stage, however, Indians had to remain content with minimal clothing till the time revival of cottage industry takes place. Simultaneously, India needed to destroy its foreign stock as no destruction precedes regeneration. 'Because the nation has to realize the crime that it has committed in abandoning its home industries and taking to foreign cloth, it is a necessary penance in order to demonstrate a change of heart.' There was no competition between manual labour and machinery that sent the indigenous industries to go to the wall. There was diabolical pressure that made people deliberately sacrifice their own interest. 'It is historically true that when we gave up our home industries there was no competition between the handloom and the machinery.' There was no voluntary acceptance of idleness or starvation or oppression by gumastas. The simple fact of the history was that the 'owing to the political advantages which the East India Company had obtained they were in a position to force upon the people machine-made goods.' Their machine-made goods were not cheap. 'Over and over again the people of the country were terrorized into giving up their occupation of cloth manufacture. By such means as for instance the cutting of their own thumbs by the weavers themselves when their labour was impressed.' The process went on for so

102 Interview to Delhi Express, September 15 1921, (CWMG vol.21, 109)
long that it effectively obliterated the enterprise even from the societal conscience.103

Many argued that spinning was intellectually unchallenging. It was monotonous. Gandhi saw nature's own cycle as most monotonous and yet it was life-giving. 'And imagine the catastrophe that would befall the universe if the sun became capricious and went in for a variety of pastimes.' Artists work too was most monotonous but that never tires an artist. Spinning too could be invigorating if one masters the art. 'There is a music about the spindle which the practiced spinner catches without fail.' India's thing of joy, her Swaraj, would spring out of this monotonous turning of Charkha.104 Some saw espousal of hand-spinning as hindrance to technological progress.105 Another oft-repeated intellectual question was about Khadi Movement taking country to backwardness. It was out of sync with times.106 Gandhi did not concede such a motive n his campaign.107

Gandhi's attempt to bend gender roles did not meet with much success. An interesting instance is of a gentleman who came to Gandhi for some post-retirement engagements. Gandhi advised him to take to spinning. 'I could not think of any better work for him, considering his health, than plying the spinning wheel', Gandhi reported of the incident in Navajivan. The man left the Ashram at once. 'Perhaps I lowered myself in his esteem', Gandhi added jocularly. In the societal consciousness, to spin was womanly vocation. To men, its very mention insulted

103 'Interview to Madras Mail', September 15 1921, (CWMG vol.21,116)
104 'Letter to Devdas Gandhi', August 18 1921, (CWMG vol.20,529)
105 'The Leader considers that I am putting back the hands of the clock of progress by attempting to replace mill-made cloth and mill-spun yarn by hand-woven and hand-spun yarn. Now, I am making no such attempt at all. I have no quarrel with the mill.' 'Swadeshi', YOUNG INDIA, August 18 1920, (CWMG vol.18,176)
106 'I consider it no sin to go back to the condition which existed two hundred or even two thousand years ago. It is evidence of our having exercised our judgment if we adopt again the wholesome practices which we may have given up either through ignorance or under compulsion or through sheer passage of time.' 'Some Doubts', Navajivan, April 24 1921, (CWMG vol.20,32)
107 'Do I want to put back the hand of the clock of progress? Do I want to replace the mills by hand-spinning and hand-weaving? Do I want to replace the railway by the country cart? Do I want to destroy machinery altogether? These questions have been asked by some journalists and public men. My answer is: I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do at the present moment is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mills, save the millions we send out of India, and distribute them in our cottages. This I cannot do unless and until the nation is prepared to devote its leisure hours to hand-spinning.' 'The Secret of Swaraj', YOUNG INDIA, January 19 1921, (CWMG vol.19,241)
their sense of masculine self. In a society with deeply entrenched norms of gender roles, spinning would sprightly be successful in crossing the boundary. Gandhi compared spinning with cooking which in many home men undertook though ordinarily it is conceived to be women's work. 'Similarly, though the spinning-wheel may be ordinarily for women, occasionally men also can work on it.' If not for nothing, it could be plied just for recreation, as an 'innocent pleasure', as a relief from pressing engagements.  

M N Roy had pilloried the Khadi Movement by asserting that it was sheer 'waste of energy'. He contended that the central thesis of the Khadi movement that it sought to engage peasants' ideal hours into gainful employment was futile. 'What leisure he has he needs.' The peasants' four-month idling was much needed respite from the overworked eight-month. There was no leisure for Charkha, Roy had contended. On the surface Roy's argument seemed plausible. And yet, his was an analysis borne out of his inexperience of the rural lives, Gandhi wrote in his rejoinder. There was no slaving at Charkha. It was a kind of recreational exercise. To women, of course, it was to involve on the permanent basis. It certainly added to peasants' meager income as it was mainly a supplementary occupation.

As asked if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery, Gandhi answered in negative. Gandhi supported any machinery which did not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helped the individual and added to his efficiency, and which a man could handle at will without being its slave. He was not against great inventions either. 'If we could have

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108 'To mention the spinning-wheel before men is to make them feel that they are being insulted. Not only do I not think this way but I believe, on the contrary, that all work beneficial to society is for both, men and women.' 'What should I do?', Navijvan, June 20 1920, (CWMG vol.17,495)

109 'Dr. Ray's critic considers that all the effort made on behalf of the charkha is "a waste of energy". The central point in Dr. Ray's argument is that the charkha has a message specially for the peasant in that it enables him to utilize his idle hours. The critic contends that the peasant has not any idle hours to utilize. What leisure he has, he needs. If he is idle for four months, it is because he has over-worked himself for eight months and that if he is made to work the four months at the wheel, his efficiency for eight months' work will deteriorate from year to year. In other words, according to the critic, the nation has no leisure for the charkha. It appears to me that the critic has little if any experience of the peasantry of India. Nor has he been able to picture to himself the way the charkha would work, and indeed is working today. The peasantry does not need to slave at the charkha. It affords a pleasant variety and recreation after hard toil. As a permanent institution, it is presented to the women of India. They will spin during odd moments.' 'Waste of energy?', YOUNG INDIA, August 21 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 20-23)
electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity.' He just desired communal or State-ownership of the power generation plants. But as long as there was no electricity and no machinery, idle hands needed to be provided with work.

Congress represented 'the dumb, semi-starved millions'. Its representative character was being fashioned by AISA, an offshoot of Congress, with it now providing work to some fifty-thousand women, half of which are Mussalmans and so called untouchables. The crisis of rising unemployment in Lancashire was a matter of concern. It was seen as direct consequence of Gandhi's boycott of foreign cloth movement in India. Gandhi's friend Andrews too grieved at Gandhi's insistence on having boycott as permanent programme. Lancashire rose on the ruins of Indian village industry. Was their any violation of any moral or commercial principle if Indians now began to revive their indigenous cottage industry? Was there any canon of morality which compelled him to prefer Lancashire cloth in order to sustain Lancashire labourers, who through all these years had been impoverishing them? His movement did not upheld Indian mills against those of British but was reinvigorating village cottage industries.

It was not the economic factors such as cheap dumping of foreign cloth on Indian soil that made its boycott impossible from people's perspective. Neither were the factors such as dearness or durability that slackened the demand for Khadi. Rather it was deficient performance of national duty that restrained complete exclusion of foreign cloth in favour of Khadi. Not the cost but ethics that was the determining factor. 'A good Hindu does not count the cost of performing his Gayatri or his multitudinous ceremonials. A good Mussalman does not count the cost of offering his prayers five times a day, neither bargain for an easier road to heaven.' In their relentless pursuit of profit the foreign merchants might submerge remotest of Indian market with their cheap merchandise. But it was in the discretionary power of a duty-conscious Indian to repel the enticement even if it offered superior quality or at economically advantageous terms.110

110 Currency and Cotton Mills, YOUNG INDIA, August 13 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 65)