Chapter Four

Khadi and Congress

Conciliating Conflict
On eighth day of February 1929, Rasik died of typhoid in Delhi. Rasik was Gandhi’s eldest grandson, son of his derelict son Harilal. Rasik died young, at the age of seventeen. He died in Delhi where he had gone to assist his uncle, Devdas, Gandhi’s youngest son, who was then teaching a course in spinning at the fledgling Jamia-Milia-Islamia. While Rasik’s father had turned into a tragic but fallen rebel, his mother had died when he was a toddler. Rasik had been nurtured in Ashram imbibing what Gandhi had thought was the best education. He had become an expert spinner and had won accolades for his skills during the national week spinning spree. In Rasik, a grandfather saw his own childhood so much so that his name revived Gandhi’s adolescent memories. Gandhi’s childhood friend, Sheikh Mehtab, who later also came to stay with him in South Africa, was an occasional poet. He wrote his poems under the pseudonym of ‘Rasik’. Gandhi had built great hopes on Rasik. He was ‘a boy of much promise’, Gandhi wrote in a tribute.¹

When Rasik died, Gandhi was in Sind, campaigning for charkha and Khadi Fund. Since his release from Jail in 1924, Gandhi had been ceaselessly traveling across the country as an ambassador of Khadi exhorting people to spin, organizing sales, inaugurating exhibitions, straightening hurdles, massaging egos, collecting funds, and writing in his ‘viewspaper’ all that he saw, thought and was informed about. In the beginning of year 1927, Gandhi wrote to his ashram inmates that he ‘must wander about in the interest of Khadi.’² He traveled third-class, which he had resumed after a bout of second-class traveling during the heady days of non-cooperation. His needs were frugal; he ate and wore minimal. There were times when his exertion brought him to the precipice of death. Yet he recovered to undertake more travels, more speeches, and more of every thing. His excesses upon his body were directly proportional to the pain that his immediate surrounding inflicted upon him. Upon hearing the news of Rasik’s death, he refused to alter or abandon his tour

¹ ‘Rasik was from his infancy being trained to become a national servant. He was clever, pushful and ambitious. He was an expert carder.’ ‘A Boy of much promise’, YOUNG INDIA, February 21 1929, CWMG vol.40: 13.

² ‘I find that this year I shall not be able to stay in the Ashram for a long time. I am sorry for this. But we must find happiness even in misfortune. I must wander about in the interest of Khadi. Only thus can I carry the message of Khadi to the masses....Devotion means faith—faith in God and faith in oneself. Such faith leads one to make all sacrifices.’ ‘Letter to Ashram Women’, January 24 1927, CWMG vol.33: 6.
programme. ‘My day’s work goes on uninterrupted’, Gandhi wrote to Mira Behn informing Rasik’s untimely demise. He conceded the pain but termed it ‘selfishness’.

In embracing death, Rasik was not alone. Many a Khadi workers, young men and women, perished while actually being involved in campaign and operational work. Driven by Gandhi’s moral call many a young men took to work in Khadi network. Not just the working condition was difficult, depressing, and demanding but most of the work was meagerly paid. It was only idealism coupled with an inspiring leadership that kept their spirit high but body caved in occasionally. Diseases such as malaria could easily strike at the weak bodies. There were many a young man who succumbed to exhaustion and in inhospitable work space. The editor Gandhi wrote glowing tributes and obituaries. He gave commanding spaces to sacrifices and steadfast devotion of Khadi workers in his journals. They were Gandhi’s silent workers, scattered all over the country, carrying out his biddings in utter unanimity.

Gandhi advised workers to refrain from worries. He was particularly concerned about the health of Bengal colleague, Satish Chandra Dasgupta, who prior to his involvement with Khadi Prathisthan worked as a chemist and was earning a handsome salary. But after he joined Khadi movement the pressure of a slow-moving work weighed heavily upon him. He often relapsed into sad and sullen moods. Gandhi wrote to him advising restraint and referring Gita. ‘Whatever the cause, you dare not be moody or morose. You and I and several others have embarked upon a work of service the equal of which I do not know in the whole world. The greater the service greater the suffering required… Do you know the song ‘Cheer, boys, cheer, no more of idle sorrow’? Then another time Gandhi wrote, “What does it matter if Khadi lives

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3 ‘Have just had a wire saying Rasik passed away yesterday. God’s will is our law. My day’s work goes on uninterrupted….I am purposely refraining from sending you a wire about Rasik. Let us work’ 'Letter to Mirabehan', February 9 1929, CWMG vol.39: 431.

4 ‘No country possesses a record of the names of its noblest sons. They are known only by their works like the authors of the most valuable ancient books. There are many young men who die in the service of their country and yet remain unknown to fame. I have received the news of the death of such a silent worker in the cause of Khadi in Arambagh, Hooghly.’ ‘Notes: A Silent Worker’, YOUNG INDIA, November 26 1925, CWMG vol.29: 274.

or perishes?' After Maganlal's death in 1928, Satish Chandra Dasgupta offered to take his place. His own health was fragile. Gandhi declined the offer by saying that 'Best service you can render today is to build up your body so as to spare me another shock.'

When the going got tough or the task seemed uphill, Gandhi fought to reinstate faith in Khadi as much in himself as in his colleagues. 'Do not admit defeat about Khadi', Gandhi wrote to a despondent co-worker, 'this work is a kind of tapascharya.' He said spinning wheel was 'a gateway to my salvation' and was ridiculed. But he struck and reiterated, 'I think of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel.' He saw in Khadi a force of truth worth pursuing. 'We do not give up our faith in truth, or forsake its practice or its propagation, even if the whole world habitually speaks untruth.' When Mirabehan requested English translation of Gita for her, Gandhi said he could do it only by suspending his spinning. That he would not do as the spinning was 'applied translation' of the Gita. Mirabehan was also the one person who undertook many an experiments in developing suitable spinning wheel.

His travels throughout the period were in the cause of daridranarayana. Khadi was the only instrument of propitiation. Most of his post-1926 travels were 'purely a business and businesslike tour'. Each leg of Gandhi's national tour began with the

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6 'I want your assurance that, whatever may be the nature of the work, you are not going to put an undue strain upon yourself. Do not be anxious about Khadi or the Pratishthan which is one and the same thing.' Letter to Satish Chandra Dasgupta, July 19 1927, CWMG vol.34: 200.

7 Telegram to Satish Chandra Dasgupta, April 25 1928, CWMG vol.36: 260.

8 'For a person suffering from the pangs of hunger, and desiring nothing but to fill his belly, his belly is his God. To give alms to such persons, who are sound in all their limbs, is to debase oneself and them. What they need is some kind of occupation, and the occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand-spinning. But I can instill my faith in the potency of hand-spinning in the minds of the toilers of India not by making speeches but only by spinning myself.' 'My Kamdhenu', YOUNG INDIA, May 20 1926, CWMG vol.30: 308.

9 'Do not admit defeat about Khadi; this work is a kind of tapascharya. We do not give up our faith in truth, or forsake its practice or its propagation, even if the whole world habitually speaks untruth; in this age and in the circumstances in which we are placed, we should act in the same manner in regard to Khadi.' 'Letter to Mathuradas, June 20 1927, CWMG vol.34: 31.

10 'You ask for the Gita translation. I should love to do it. The Gita translation is a big task. You will agree I may not suspend the spinning for it. For the spinning is applied translation of the Gita if one may coin that expression.' 'Letter to Mirabehan', July 14 1930, CWMG vol.44: 20.

11 'Referring to the boycott of foreign cloth, you have requested for help from the Akhil Bharat Charkha Sangh. I request you to formulate a scheme in a business-like manner and forward it on
proclamation: 'I have come here to do business—to collect money for Charkha and Khadi and to sell Khadi.' At each of the touring place he specifically sought out information regarding the number of wheels and looms working, monthly production of yarn and Khadi in quantity and value; monthly sale locally and outside of Khadi produced; number of habitual wearers of Khadi and self-spinners etc. Gandhi also carried a quantity of Khadi with him for sales at every meeting and at railway stations. 'Empty your pockets for the poor' was his short message. People came to his public meetings walking miles and carrying their own Charkahs in a show of solidarity. He held himself ‘a humble trustee for the millions of paupers of India’. In his public meetings he spoke of the ‘skeletons’ of Orissa, its ‘death-like quiet’ that reminded him of his first introduction with real India at Champaran. He exhorted his audience to adopt Khadi, as that established their bond with ‘dumb millions’. Chettis of Madras were requested by Gandhi not to ‘wear our wealth so loudly’ while pleading for Khadi. Spinning wheel was also presented as mechanism by which gender discrimination could be righted. If taking to Wheel was an instrument in economic freedom for women, it was a ‘sacrificial rite’ for men. But he also implored his audience for the speedy acceptance of Khadi so as to relieve him from ‘bania’ work. According to him, its tardy acceptance was consuming his energy that was under utilization of his potential.

Clothing needs of a culture became an obsession with Gandhi. He scrutinized it and then derived inferences for Khadi. Gandhi saw an opportunity in the frugal clothing needs of the people in Malabar. While in Srilanka he compared dress needs of its inhabitants with those of Malabar. ‘Women’s dress here is very simple,’ to his Ashram women he reported back, ‘in fact it may be said that men and women dress practically in the same way. Only, the dhotis here are dyed and have various designs on them. Both wear jackets, though there is a slight difference in cut. Women are never without jackets, whereas men are content often to come out with only dhotis on. Malabar has also similar dress, only the dhotis there are not dyed. These clothes are

to the Akhil Bharat Charkha Sangh for its acceptance.' 'Speech at Public Meeting', Vizagapatam, April 28 1929, CWMG vol.40: 302

Young India, 1927-28, p29 quoted in Freedom Movement in Bihar, Volume I p476.

13 "I am bent upon doing some work of a 'bania'. Wherever I might have been touring, I have not forgotten my 'bania' work.' 'Speech at Public Meeting', Vizagapatam, April 28 1929, CWMG vol.40: 302.
bound to be very cheap. Only if people in these two States begin to take a liking for khaddar, there will be no difficulty for them to adopt it.’ Lajpat Rai was told of the role Khadi was playing in breaking the caste segregation. ‘I want you for Khadi’, he wrote to Rai, ‘I know what a gain it would be.’ He desired Rai as a convinced ‘fellow-worker who would be working for the cause of Khadi to the best of his ability’. At another time he wrote he needed Rai ‘not as a distant admirer’ but someone who gave ‘heart and soul’ to the Khadi movement. To Viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi sent Gregg’s *Economics of Khaddar*. He humbly wrote in an enclosed letter, ‘You were good enough to say that when you had more leisure you would like to discuss the potency of Khadi with me. If you have the leisure and still the inclination I am at your service.’

Ambition to influence both “the classes and the masses” is an oft-repeated phrase that remained with Gandhi for ever. Publicity was important. ‘Publicity is of the greatest importance for stimulating production as well as sale’, he wrote. His nation wide tours and speeches, his writings in his journals which now numbered three, one each in English, Hindi and Gujarati were some of the tools of publicity. He used self-edited journals from very early on, as the editor of *Collected Works* notes, for ‘establishing an intimate and clean bond between the editor and the readers’. Imperatives of movement made him launch journals exclusively devoted to Khadi. Maganlal Gandhi primarily looked after them. *Khadi Samachar Patrika* was one such

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14 ‘And in this connection let me tell you what an important part Khadi is playing in reaching even the unapproachables and invisibles, because it is Khadi that makes it possible to establish contacts which before were impossible or unthinkable.’ ‘Letter to Lajpat Rai’, April 29 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 283)

15 ‘I want you not as a distant admirer of Khadi and Khadi movement. I want you to throw yourself heart and soul into it with a full deep conviction just as you have thrown yourself into untouchability movement.’ ‘Letter to Lajpat Rai’, May 12 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 311)

16 ‘I promised to send you literature on Khadi. I delayed sending the other pamphlets pending the publication of Mr. Gregg’s volume. You were good enough to say that when you had more leisure you would like to discuss the potency of Khadi with me. If you have the leisure and still the inclination I am at your service.’ ‘Letter to Lord Irwin, April 26 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 272)

17 ‘Accused Judging’, *YOUNG INDIA*, June 21 1928, (CWMG vol.24, 439)

18 Preface to volume four, (CWMG vol.4,viii)

19 Gandhi had fine tuned his struggle strategy in the South Africa where his formative experiments took place. As an editor he learnt the importance of being a journalist and running a self-edited newspaper and the need for effective and sustained communication.
Then, there was the *Khadi News Centre* which used to issue leaflets containing relevant data about the Khadi production and sales. There were special drives for production and sales of Khadi during such nationally recognized periods as Satyagraha Week that fell in April or Gandhi Month that began with the Mahatma’s birthday on 2nd October. In these periods, concentrated effort was made to increase production and sales of Khadi throughout the country.

In March-April 1930, a forty-five kilogram, sixty year old Gandhi marched to Dandi, a sea-side village on the western coast, with a bamboo-shaft in hand, two cloth-bags dangling on each of hips, straps crossing over his bare chest and eighty of Ashram inmates as walking companions. This was the famous Dandi March that culminated in the breach of salt-law and launching of the civil-disobedience movement. Of the eighty-one companions, majority was of those associated with Khadi activity; twenty-five were Khadi students. 'The army was dressed in a uniform of sorts—one denoting humility. The clothes were of Khadi, and included the familiar "Gandhi cap".' In most villages, marchers were accommodated under a Khadi canopy. The March was accompanied by a bullock cart. It acted as mobile Khadi sales office. It also carried the Charkhas used by the Marchers for their daily spinning. Charkhas used, as Weber shows, were the large and cumbersome Bardoli Charkha. Daily spinning by the marchers was part of discipline. Every village he halted on his way he enquired of its record on Khadi. He made it desirable for marchers to collect information related to Khadi from each of village where marchers halted *en route*. The questionnaire that was required to be answered queried of number of spinning wheels available in the village, monthly consumption of Khadi by villagers, number of people exclusively wearing Khadi etc. He needed information to be handed over to him immediately after his arrival in the village. This statistical information besides the

20 'One learns from it that some workers have resolved to wear Khadi exclusively and some others to have the spinning-wheel and the loom in their homes.' Mills-hands and Khadi, *Navajivan* May 25 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 120)

21 It appears from these figures that, during the ‘Gandhi Month’, the sales of Khadi in Orissa, by the Bombay Khadi Samiti, in Kerala and in the Marathi region of the Central Provinces have amounted to not less than Rs. 2,60,789. Obviously, this cannot include all private sales. 'Sale of Khadi', *Navajivan*, May 25 1924, (CWMG vol.24,132)

general issue of grievous Salt law formed the departure point of his speeches. At many of the villages he was disappointed that there was no consumption of Khadi, habitual Khadi wearers or spinning wheels at work. He openly criticized the villages for the dearth of Khadi wearers and spinning wheel users. 'Those of you', he said, 'who do not enlist as soldiers of Swaraj should at least wear Khadi'. Later however momentum generated by the march brought increased consumption of Khadi. The mobile Khadi shop began doing good business. Khadi during these tumultuous days was to regain its rebellious and fashionable symbol. Soon however, as its demand peaked, its supply sapped and Gandhi asked people to buy less and consume less.

Yeravda Jail, called by Gandhi as Mandir, became after his arrest in 1930 a spinning abode. Spinning a targeted quantity of yarn required Gandhi to sit in an unchanging posture for close to four hours at a stretch. At an age of sixty-one, Gandhi found it physically strenuous to accustom his body to the demanding schedule. But spinning was part of his 'spiritual discipline'; it was an 'applied translation' of the Gita, his spiritual reference book. He therefore would not shirk from spinning. His comrades sent him different kinds of wheel to ease off the strain. But none matched his requirement of a wheel that yielded the designated amount of yarn while at the same time reduced his hours at spinning. His passion was also to spin finer counts so as to reduce the consumption of slivers. He however was unable to stand upto his own expectation. 'I am a lame duck in so far as spinning is concerned', Gandhi admitted in exasperation to an Ashram colleague. 'I love it, I work hard and pay great attention to it but the speed simply does not increase. How can I blame the spinning-wheel which I use?' 23 But soon Gandhi reported to Mirabehan with whom he continually exchanged ideas on spinning that his mastery over the wheel was increasing yet there was much room for improvement. 24 Later he wrote 'I am making daily progress and do not know what fatigue is on wheel'. 25 At yet another time he wrote her 'The wheel

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23 Letter to Narandas Gandhi, August 3/5 1930, CWMG vol.44: 68.
24 My mastery over the wheel is increasing. The fatigue is no longer felt. I see that if you concentrate on the puni end whilst the thread is drawing, then on the point of the spindle when the thread is being shifted to the cone and then on the cone when it is brought there, you avoid breakage if the puni is sound. I hope shortly to increase the speed appreciably. It is better even now. But there is much room for improvement. Anyway, just now it is the wheel that absorbs my attention to the exclusion of other studies.' 'Letter to Mirabehan', September 7 1930, CWMG vol.44: 127.
25 'I want to reach a high standard both in spinning and carding.' 'Letter to Mirabehan', September 28 1930, CWMG vol.44: 178.
and thinking about it make the time fly'. Gandhi also made many discoveries relating to the spinning process. From his experience he concluded that a good carding did not necessarily give an even yarn upon spinning. The drawing of even yarn was therefore not dependent alone on carding but it was also an art by itself. The hand spinning was much dependent on the deftness of one's fingers. Of the yarn that Gandhi spun while imprisoned at Yervada, a part was used for weaving Kasturba's sari.

With such intense industry, sacrifices and sufferings, not just Khadi movement was built up but mass consciousness too was shaken to participate. It was a unique way of bringing mass participation in a culture that traditionally scorned at such show of communal industry. It was a way to political mobilization of masses in a socio-cultural context that reserved the domain of macro polity, governance and economics primarily to elite maneuvering. Gandhi brought masses into the making of destiny of a nation. It was designed to gain freedom for millions. In this conception, Swaraj was not to be limited to traditional elites but was built on from below. Its prime beneficiary was Congress which got transformed into a movement from that of a debating club. It is another matter that circumstances conspired to marginalize not just the Mahatma but also the grassroots mobilization on the issues of livelihood rights.

In early 1924, Gandhi was released from prison due to ill health. He was operated upon. His release coincided with the raging issue of the day: Elections to Council. He was against Congress' participation in the election; doing so was contravention of the principles of non-co-operation, he argued. There was a large section of Congress politicians who were opposed to his analysis. Their legitimacy was drawn from the fact that they were headed by Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan

26 'Keshu did offer to send me a bamboo charkha. I would not let him. The fault was mine in that I did not master the detailed working of it when there was ample opportunity for so doing. I am now doing penance by mastering it by making mistakes.' Letter to Mirabehan, September 14 1930, CWMG vol.44: 145.

27 'My experience is that there can be no guarantee that yarn will be evenly drawn if the cotton has been well carded. The drawing of even yarn is also an art by itself and depends on deftness in using one's fingers.' Letter to Mathuradas Purushottam, August 21 1930, CWMG vol.44: 94.

28 'If you have not received from Swami the yarn which I spin in jail, write to him and obtain it from him; after giving to the All India Spinners' Association and the Cow-protection Society such quantity from it as may have to be given to them, I should like you to use the rest to get a sari woven for Ba.' Letter to Narandas Gandhi, February 16 1931, CWMG vol.45: 181.
Das. Somehow they seemed a bunch of politicians who earlier, during the non-co-operation movement, had adopted a wait and watch policy and later had triumphantly declared it to be a failure. Now they wanted to bring Swaraj from inside the legislative hall. For the purpose, and faced with the opposition from Gandhi loyalist, they had formed a separate Swaraj Party. The manifesto of the new party, which was issued in October 1923, projected the Swarajists as 'a party within the Congress, and as such an integral part of the Congress.'\textsuperscript{29} No-changers were those who were said to support Gandhi's views on the course of national struggle. Gandhi was against lending the name of Congress to Swarajists' cause. He wanted continuation of Congress agenda of non-co-operation.\textsuperscript{30} Swarajists wanted its repeal. He talked of 'fundamental difference' that existed between him and the Swarajists.\textsuperscript{31} 'The Swarajist method', he said, 'cultivates British opinion and looks to the British Parliament for Swaraj. The No-change method looks to the people for it.'\textsuperscript{32} Gandhi did not deny the existence or the utility of Council completely. His premise was that they were of no consequence to the masses. A compromise was worked out. In reality, it was what Gandhi wanted. He asked the dissidents to work out their Council entry programme through Swaraj Party. And, the Congress was to be left alone for carrying on Khadi programme.\textsuperscript{33} He further wanted to cleanse Congress executive bodies of Swarajist members. Or of any one who smacked of co-operation in any form. Only those who believed in the creed of non-co-operation and Khadi were to remain in the Congress. That facilitated its efficient functioning, he argued. Those who lacked faith in Khadi were to resign by their own choice. Why cling to a position if the efficacy of the programme laid out by the Congress was doubted?, he asked.

\textsuperscript{29} Quoted in Bandhu, \textit{History of Indian National Congress, 1885-2002}, p.108.

\textsuperscript{30} 'The khaddar and the national schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work,' \textit{Statement to Associate press of India, Bombay}, May 22 1924, \textit{CWMG} vol.24: 109.

\textsuperscript{31} 'There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-co-operation as conceive it. Nor is this difference a mere matter of interpretation of the word "non-co-operation", but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems.' \textit{Statement to Associate press of India, Bombay}, May 22 1924, \textit{CWMG} vol.24: 109.

\textsuperscript{32} 'Defeated and Humbled', \textit{YOUNG INDIA}, July 3 1924, \textit{CWMG} vol.24: 339.

He proposed four resolutions to the effect. They were, as he said, application for his employment for the general of the movement. In fact, they were his conditions for the acceptance of leadership. And, if not conceded, he was ready to form another organization outside the Congress to work out its programme. He was prepared to leave the Congress but not abandon Khadi. The threat brought a laboured truce. The cleavage was too apparent for anything else. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) met at Ahmedabad in the last week of June 1924. Gandhi proposed resolutions that affirmed his belief. First of the four resolutions was Spinning Resolution. It asked each delegate to the representative Congress organizations (such as AICC, CWC, or provincial Congress committees) to spin daily for half-an-hour. And to 'ensure that appearance corresponds to reality', the yarn (at least, two-thousand yard) was to be sent to the Manager of the Khadi Board. The dispatch frequency was to have a monthly regularity, failure of which meant a penalty of voluntary dismissal from the membership. Second resolution further tightened the noose. It prohibited any dereliction of central instructions by the provincial Congress members. Any failure to comply meant voluntary resignation. Third resolution was to cleanse Congress executive bodies of members who neither spun nor wore Khadi. The three resolutions effectively defined Gandhi's aggressive posture in face of 'camouflage and make-believe'. It was an attack on the 'lip-loyalty'.

34 'All the four resolutions then constitute my application for employment as general and lay down my qualifications and limitations. Here there is no imposition of autocracy, no impossible demand. The soldiers are in the happy position of being electors of their own general. The would-be general must know the conditions of employment. I remain where I stood in 1920.' The Acid Test', Young India, June 19 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 269.

35 'In my opinion, no murder can be consistent with my own personal creed of non-violence. Whether political murder can be justified morally or politically is a question which everybody must answer for himself.' Interview to The Times of India, June 5 1924, CWMG vol.24: 203.

36 'I know that the members of the A.I.C.C. are elected by democratic methods, and I have not suggested any change in this. I have only advised a course by following which we may, without changing the rule, ensure that appearance corresponds to reality.' Maha Gujarat's Duty', Navajivan, June 8 1924, CWMG vol.24: 209.

37 'All I am pleading against is camouflage and make-believe. It will ruin our cause. If we cannot run Congress organizations without practising lawyers, let us by all means remove the lawyers' boycott. And if we do not believe in the spinning-wheel, let us ignore it. No mere lip-loyalty to the wheel will give us the yarn we want for the thirty crores. In other words, let us do what all successful organizations have done hitherto; that is, to be entrusted to those who must thoroughly believe in them. Orators cannot run an organization whose chief business is to teach and popularize spinning nor can spinners run a debating assembly where oratory counts for everything.' Notes: An Appropriate Query, YOUNG INDIA, June 12 1924, CWMG vol.24: 233.
It was the fourth resolution that showed how deep the wedge was. It was concerning Gopinath Saha, a revolutionary who in his patriotic zeal had murdered an English officer. Saha was later condemned to capital punishment. Bengalis eulogized his courage and Chittaranjan Das blessed a resolution in the provincial Congress paying homage to the hanged revolutionary. It was a direct challenge to Gandhi's creed of non-violence. He had been talking that 'peaceful and legitimate' in the Congress constitution meant in effect 'non-violent and truthful'. But no one paid heed. There were other Swarajists who were equally belligerent. Some talked of inevitability of 'fratricidal struggle' in the Congress given Gandhi's hold on the organization. Gandhi did not relent. At Ahmedabad, in his fourth resolution, he condemned the culture of political violence. All four resolutions were potentially divisive. Not since 1920, the Congress had such a face-off with its destiny. It was a moment of denouement; a time for trial.

Gandhi continued with his relentless pursuit for the acceptance of his agenda. Just prior to meet, he wrote an open letter to AICC members. At the very outset, he declared: 'I believe in Khaddar. I believe in the spinning wheel.' And went on to repeat what he had been saying since he had begun to unfold his 'primary aims'. Khadi's adoption would obliterate foreign self-interest. It would sensitize the educated of starving millions. In short, 'It is life giving.' The resolutions, he said, were 'mild minimum' for the attainment of Swaraj. His iron fist was then bared with the same polite self. If resolutions meant mutual bitterness, if it meant parting of ways, he

38 On being asked if he called Saha a patriot, Gandhi said: 'I would call murderers like Gopinath Saha patriots, but not without an indispensable adjective, namely, 'misleading'.' Interview to The Times of India, June 5 1924, CWMG vol.24: 200.

39 Dr. Moonje had stated that the Swarajists would now concentrate their energies on breaking Mr. Gandhi's hold on the Congress and that a fratricidal struggle in the Congress was now inevitable. Gandhi refused to take part in the 'fratricidal struggle'. Interview to The Times of India, June 5 1924, CWMG vol.24: 203.

40 'In its benign aspect, it gives a new life and hope to the villager. It can fill millions of hungry mouths. It alone can bring us in touch and in tune with the villagers. It is the very best popular education that is needed for the millions. It is life-giving. I would not, therefore, hesitate to turn the Congress into an exclusively khaddar-producing and khaddar-propaganda organization till the attainment of Swaraj. To be truly national the Congress must devote itself exclusively to that which will bring the nation most quickly within reach of swaraj. 'Open letter to AICC Members', Before June 26 1924, CWMG vol.24: 285.

41 'I am not unmindful of the fact that the resolutions which I propose to move have created a serious difference of opinion and led to much bitterness, and I am also aware that, because of these differences of opinion, a time may come when we may have to part company with co-workers.' Speech at AICC Meeting, Ahmedabad, June 28 1924, CWMG vol.24: 306.
shall have it with equanimity, he said. But if he must lead the Congress then he must have his 'instruments'. Congressmen 'must either choose another leader or accept my condition.' Game was check-mated. Politics is nothing if not a game in brinkmanship. It is also biding for one's time. And, soon, Gandhi was outmanoeuvered. When it came to the penalty clause attached to the Spinning Resolution, the Swarajists abstained from voting. It exposed chinks in the armour. Though Gandhi's resolution was carried by 67 votes against 37 with Swarajist Party protesting with absence, his vulnerability was obvious. If Swarajists had voted he could have been easily outnumbered. He bowed and, with some chivalry, rescinded the penalty clause from the Spinning Resolution. The Swarajists had extracted their price. The Spinning Resolution no longer had any teeth. It became merely a policy statement worth not even the paper it was written on. Gandhi was left to lurch.

But it was really the fourth Resolution over Gopinath Saha that brought alive what Gandhi had been writing about: that the difference between him and the Swarajists was 'fundamental' and not just related to 'details'. Speaker after speaker from the podium of AICC spoke in defence of Saha. When it came to voting, only eight votes separated violence from non-violence. While 70 opposed, 78 supported Gandhi's resolution. Gandhi's eyes swelled up, tears flew on his cheek. But he went on. 'I for one wish to deal only with straightforward men. All of you are not that', he was bitter and yet compassionate. 'If you wish to be true to yourself, leave the Congress and work in the villages. You can take a donkey's work from me, but do that in a straightforward way, not in a cunning way.'

Gandhi was 'defeated and humbled'. Although all his resolutions scrambled through, in reality, he had a series of defeats. It was clear it was not his day. It was a

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42 'There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-co-operation as I conceive it.' Statement to Associate Press of India, May 22 1924, CWMG vol.24: 109.

43 'I for one wish to deal only with straightforward men. All of you are not that. What is the All-India Congress Committee? It will be what you would make of it. If you wish to be true to yourself, leave the Congress and work in the villages. You can take a donkey’s work from me, lout that in a straightforward way, not in a cunning way. True, you can hoodwink me, but when I see that you are betraying me, I shall seek refuge in God and will stand aloof from you.' Speech at AICC Meeting, June 30 1924, CWMG vol.24: 331.

44 The first resolution is bereft of the penalty clause. It was my first defeat in a series. Majorities cannot deceive me. It was impossible for me to be satisfied with a bare majority when I knew that, if the, Swarajist withdrawals were to be taken into account, the defeat was a certainty... The
day of 'darkness invisible'. The drubbing left him dumb. This was a revenge of old politics that had been simmering not just since the Bardoli resolution and his imprisonment, a month after, in 1922. It had been there since he swept aside the established Congress structure to install a new creed, a new agenda, and a new constituency. With his power, physical as well as political, seemingly crippled, the dormant but not dismantled old politics took centre stage. But Gandhi recouped. Soon, his rejoinder reflected characteristic resilience and resolve. The momentary frustration had made him contemplate retirement and take up Khadi organization independent of the Congress. Now his name began to be circulated for the Congress president for the year 1925. It consoled him that masses stood steadfast with him and his agenda. He would drink the 'bitter cup', pocket his pride and then work towards his agenda within the Congress. So long as he was not driven out by being turned into an actual numerical minority. He will be a party-man and yet work as a no-party man. In spinning lay his solace. With renewed vigour he clung to Khadi.

It was an AICC meet that exposed Congress claim to scrupulousness. The factions had indulged in bogus recruitment to swell their support base. The electoral rolls were openly manipulated. Every tactics from inducement to threat was adopted to make delegates fall in for a particular agenda. The phase of 'organized dishonesty' took over. It was too early for a national organization to degenerate but symptoms were starkly evident. The changed constitution had brought Congress' interface with mass mobilization. It had also inaugurated factional politics. Since its inception, Congress actually was never free from factionalism but now mobilization became bulwark of the disease. It morphed a healthy sign of ideological dissent and debate into a degenerated political power game of one-upmanship. Gandhi mid-wifed the birth of grassroots mobilization for national and non-sectarian agenda. Swarajists brought into being a Pandora box of power struggle with their participation into the electoral fray. Throughout the remaining period of the freedom struggle Congress

second resolution is not the same as the original draft, but in substance it is the same.... The third resolution constitutes real failure.... The fourth resolution however completed my defeat.' 'The All India Congress Committee', Young India, July 3 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 341-4.

45 Defeated and Humbled, YOUNG INDIA, July 3 1924, CWMG vol.24: 335.

46 In a message to No-Changers, Gandhi wrote: 'No one can prevent us from working but ourselves. There is no active programme but that of hand-spinning and production and distribution of khaddar.' 'Message to No-Changers', July 4 1924, CWMG vol.24: 354.
shall remain tainted in one way or the other and yet hold afloat lofty ideals. Its career shall be marked by political corruption as well as patriotic sacrifice.

The battle between Gandhi’s realism and Congress’ exigencies could determine India’s future. It did. The battle had begun with Gandhi’s ascendancy. It caught steam after Gandhi’s imprisonment. It feted in Gandhi’s absence. And, it sprang to dynamic shape when Gandhi was released. Gandhi’s realism had made him ‘often wonder whether it is sufficiently realized that our movement is not one for mere change of personnel but for change of the system and the methods.’ This was incomprehensible to the exigent politics of the Congress. Spinning Resolution was the first resolution in the history of the Indian National Congress that was directed inwardly. It aimed at changing the character of the Congress beyond its former self. It was not Gandhi’s maiden venture however. At Nagpur, in December 1920, he had introduced a constitution that brought into being the legendary ‘four-anna’ membership of the Congress besides other far-reaching changes. That itself had brought snide remarks and notable resignations. But, now Gandhi attempted to bore deep. It attracted an avalanche. It deflated the organization of Congress. Gandhi was forced to retreat. At least, it looked akin to that.

Gandhi’s attempt at reconstituting the Congress was borne out of his experiences after his release. Besides having a lineage it had been fortified by his stint in the jail. When he came out, Congress was deeply embroiled in debate over the council entry programme. 1923 elections under the reform package of 1919 bore ill-omen for the Congress. It gave rise to bitter controversies, mutual jealousies and hatred amongst Congress workers. The political dissensions and conflict took a toll on the national morale. With Gandhi’s disappearance behind the bar, Khadi organization stood impaired. It was in totters. Those who wore Khadi did so only to patronize him. Swarajists gave it up almost completely. His own loyalists wore it only

47 ‘The critics see nothing of Non-co-operation in the slow and unexciting khaddar programme... In thus doubting the efficacy of Khaddar, they forget that khaddar is an indispensable preparation for civil dis-obedience.’ ‘Is It Non-co-operation?,’ YOUNG INDIA, May 8 1924, CWMG vol.24:13.

48 The sales had considerably declined after his release. ‘I have also come to know that since my release from prison there has been a fall in the sale of Khadi in the entire country, as compared to what it was when I was still in prison. So long as I was in prison, people were concerned for me and believed that the spread of Khadi was a way of securing my release before my term expired and that, on my release, I would immediately secure Swaraj.’ ‘Is Bombay Asleep?’, Navajivan, March 29 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 382.
In 1924, a Congress worker vented his frustration by observing that it appealed 'neither to our workers nor to the villagers nor to the public'.

Gandhi in attempting to make Congress 'Khadi-minded' was moved by many considerations. With him at fore, Congress was making a determined bid at attracting the mass consciousness. His efforts brought a sea-change among its constituents. But post-Gandhi's imprisonment, in many parts of the country Congress' membership fell to abysmal figures. Khadi was one programme that held the masses with the political organization. In Gandhi's conception, popular desertion began once political struggle received primacy over the Khadi programme. If Congress was to survive, it had to reassert its constructive identity, which was forged with the onset of his leadership. He desired its executive bodies to be occupied by people hailing from artisan and agricultural section of the population. Gandhi's mass politics displaced lawyers from their unquestioned leadership. There was no opportunity for those who continued to practice in Courts and still desired some positions of importance in the Congress hierarchy. Gandhi was asking even practicing lawyers to wear Khadi robes even in the Courts to make it fashionable. New parameters for leadership were being set. The Congress now catered only to those who believed in the non-co-operation.

In an organization thus conceived, privileged classes had no place in the executive. Instead educated classes were asked to be behind and 'push into public life

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49 'As regards constructive work, it appeals neither to our workers nor to the villagers nor the public. It takes a very long time and it passes my comprehension to understand how it can lead us to speedy attainment of Swaraj.' A Heart Searcher', YOUNG INDIA, May 8 1924, CWMG vol.24: 9.

50 'If anyone asked me whether I would have from Gujarat a crore of rupees or that it should become completely Khadi-minded, I would say at once, without the slightest hesitation, that I would rather see Gujarat become Khadi-minded than give me a crore of rupees.' My Request, Navajivan, May 25 1924, CWMG vol.24: 115. What Gandhi meant by being Khadi-minded was explained thus: 'Until we realize that Khadi, even if expensive, is in reality cheap and other cloth, even if offered free, is expensive, we shall never become completely Khadi-minded.' The Forthcoming Conference', Navajivan, May 11 1924, CWMG vol.24: 28.

51 'The khaddar programme undoubtedly will bring about the economic salvation of India, if it succeeds. In my opinion, no concerted action is possible for the masses without their realizing their economic salvation. Moreover, the khaddar programme is impossible without concerted action. Thirdly, a successful khaddar programme necessarily means the conversion of Englishmen themselves into nationalists, or, at least, impartial spectators of the Indian movement. They will no longer succeed in holding India under subjection for the purpose of her exploitation.' Interview to The Hindu', June 8 1924, CWMG vol.24: 216.
those who have hitherto kept aloof. The purpose of the Spinning Resolution was such. Though its teeth was spiked off, it made thirty-minute spinning an obligation upon all Congress-delegates. In accordance with the Congress resolution, every delegate was to send at least 2,000 yards of well-twisted, even yarn per month. It was in the nature of a subscription. No personal use of the yarn was allowed. The spinning thus undertaken was for the cooperation among the people and thus its use too was for the cooperative purposes. The implementation of the Spinning Resolution was the responsibility of the provincial Congress organizations. The success of the programme was dependent on the uniformity, punctuality and the magnitude of execution. For instance, Gujarat provincial Congress committee took stringent measures to implement Spinning resolution. It also set some of its own targets. It reinforced the penalty clause and also raised the amount of yarn that its members were supposed to spin and send.

Spinning Resolution was to transform Congress into an organization whose members were skilled spinners. Its calculation was based on the number of delegates on the executive positions at provincial, district, taluka and village Congress organizations in each of the twenty provinces. Even if minimum figure of five hundred representatives were taken, it added to ten-thousand delegates for twenty provinces. The Spinning Resolution bound them to send 2000 yards of yarn of ten counts every month. Ten thousand members sending their quota would have brought

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52 'The Congress had become a reality in 1920-21. There is fear of its becoming an unreality worse than before 1920. In 1920 there was no organized dishonesty. I would like the Congress to become progressively popular. I would, therefore, man it with mercantile, artisan and agricultural classes.' 'Notes: My Position', YOUNG INDIA, July 10 1924, CWMG vol.24: 358.

53 In accordance with the Congress resolution, every representative was to send at least 2,000 yards of well-twisted, even yarn per month. It was in the nature of a subscription. Some members wanted to keep the yarn themselves and had it woven for personal wear. Gandhi derided the idea. He desired provincial committees to collect and send them to the common pool. Such discipline had many advantages:
1) Monthly return of yarn.
2) Check from month to month on the quality of spinning and consequent possibility of improvement.
3) Check upon danger of slackness on the part of spinners.
4) A healthy rivalry between spinners and provinces as to the quantity and quality.
5) The certainty of cheapening the price of khaddar if the response of the Congressmen is at all in accordance with the resolution.

What to do with yarn?", YOUNG INDIA, July 26 1924, CWMG vol.24: 424.

54 'The burden of organizing spinning in every province rests with the provincial committees. Our helplessness is pitiable; we can be saved from impending ruin only if we become what we were, a nation of spinners and weavers. The Congress has, on paper at least, accepted the truth of the proposition.' 'Notes: A Step in Advance', YOUNG INDIA, July 17 1924, CWMG vol.24: 389.
to the Khadi Board every month some 2,500 pounds of yarn. That would have clothed five thousand of poor people. 'Apart from every other consideration, is this labour not worth taking for the sake of the poor?', Gandhi asked. 'Imagine the effect of such work on the poor people!' Further, it was hoped, Congressmen spinning would be infectious; inducing a similar spinning culture among poor. The prescription was to wax a waning Khadi with redoubled force. 'I must reiterate my belief that, without hand-spinning becoming universal, there will be no swaraj in terms of the masses.'

The objective was to make the middle-class spin as most of the Congress delegates belonged to it. The protagonists believed that the middle-class acceptance alone could make the revival of the craft possible. Their participation could inaugurate a sacrificial spinning movement as a mark of middle-class solidarity with poor compatriots. The voluntary spinning among the privileged was to support volunteer-cadre. It also materially affected Khadi's production and consumption. It cheapened Khadi. By adopting Khadi as sole garment, the educated could 'set the example'. The middle-class was the single-largest source of the skilled cadre that could contribute in the development of science of spinning. Khadi suffered due to technological and organizational bottlenecks. It's straightening needed skilled inputs

55 'The spinning resolution of the A.I.C.C. is, in my opinion, the most important of all the resolutions of the A.I.C.C. Even if the economic value of khaddar be admitted, it will be found on experience that the resolution was necessary to bring about an economic revolution.' 'Spinning Resolution', YOUNG INDIA, July 10 1924, CWMG vol.24: 371.

56 'It is true that we were hand-spinning before we came under foreign rule. But we did not then know the national necessity of it. Do we not often neglect our lungs by inhaling impure air? Return to the spinning-wheel means so much organization, so much co-operation, so much saving of money and so much distribution of it among the masses and so much removal of temptation from the way of the Englishmen, that it surprises me to find anyone question the possibility of establishing swaraj through the spinning-wheel.' 'In fulfillment of Promise', YOUNG INDIA, July 24 1924, CWMG vol.24: 431.

57 'It is necessary to remember that the object of the Congress resolution was to make the middle-classes spin religiously. If this effort succeeds, the cult of spinning will be revived and the hungry stomachs of the poor will be filled. Before the spinning-wheel finds a place in every home, faith in its power has to be inspired. This can be done if the middle-classes accept the spinning-wheel as a sacrament; popularization of Khadi is as imperative as the spread of the spinning-wheel.' 'My Notes: Khadi Association at Amreli', Navajivan, August 17 1924, CWMG vol.25: 11.

58 'If therefore all the provinces would organize themselves for voluntary spinning, they will soon find that the boycott of foreign cloth is a comparatively simple matter. The two obstacles in the way are said to be the dearness and the coarseness of khaddar. Both these can be completely disposed of, immediately spinning becomes a labour of love—not a very great price to pay for achieving a purpose for which we have been striving ever since the days of the late Shastri Chiplunkar and the Bengal partition.' 'Notes: Non-Representatives', YOUNG INDIA, September 11 1924, CWMG vol.25: 113-4.
that could come from the middle class. Their role in the colonial context was
equivalent to that of the government in an Independent India. Ruled as she was by a
colonial metropolis, voluntary sacrifice from its affording middle class was
replacement for the tariff protection. It was a necessity if Khadi was to gain a
competitive edge over the mill-textile. 'Khaddar is a people's programme, for success
in which all, high and low, rich and poor, Hindu and non-Hindu must take part,'
Gandhi wrote. 'In my opinion, the most important constructive activity is hand-
spinning,' Gandhi declared. 'Its possibilities are immense.'

Second related aspect was Gandhi's effort in making every province self-
sufficient in its food and clothing needs. 'Self-sufficiency in food and clothing—this
was Swaraj.' This was the central fact of Swadeshi movement. But due to the initial
need to reach out to the provinces with no production base of its own, Khadi had
mobility like other mercantile. Khadi movement, as organized, was oriented to the
needs of market. The ambition of the leaders was to bring import-substitution as far as
the clothing needs of India was concerned. It was repeatedly said that the Indian Mills
by their very infrastructural and capacity constraint were not in the position to fulfill
such a task. Khadi movement was an attempt to supplement the mill manufacture.
There was a related aspect of providing gainful employment in the rural areas. A

60 Those who have no faith in its power to bring freedom, what service can they do by remaining in
the Congress? They can, of course, get or try to get, the resolution of the Congress revised. But so
long as it stands, they should keep away from the executive bodies of the Congress.' Maha
62 Khadi's role was understood but its limitation too was obvious. Subhas Bose, in a presidential
speech delivered at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference, Poona, on 3 May 1928 said: 'If we
view the programme of the Congress during the last few years we shall find that only in our Khadi
programme have we been able to offer to our masses something which means bread and butter to
them. Khadi, I am glad to say, has brought food to thousands and thousands of hungry mouths all
over India. Given money and organization there is plenty of scope for pushing on Khadi. There
are lakhs and lakhs of poor Indians living on the verge of starvation to whom Khadi can offer a
means of subsistence, but the appeal of Khadi cannot be universal. We find from bitter experience
in some parts of Bengal that as soon as the masses are a little better off, their Charkhas lie idle and
that the peasant who gets a better return from paddy or jute cultivation refuses to cultivate cotton.'
'Democracy in India', The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Edited by Sisir K.
Bose and Sugata Bose, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997 p84.)
63 'Mill-cloth should be available to those who go without clothes at present. The real meaning of
swaraj is that every poor person in the country must have food and clothing, and for this we must
understand the nobility of Khadi, introduce the sinning-wheel into every home and tell ourselves
that it is sacrilege to wear anything except Khadi.' 'Speech at Mass Meeting', Bombay, May 29
1921, CWMG vol.20: 154.
decentralized production process could distribute national income to the maximum number of people. The movement therefore attempted to make a network of cotton-growers, individual spinners and weavers, and consumers so as to support this double-strategy. It entailed huge mobilization of man, money and machinery (building the necessary organization) for the cause of universalizing Khadi.

Third consideration was to make political work self-supporting. Khadi was its ambitious axis. Congress had changed its character. It had traversed a distance from club-confinement to mass domain. Its workers too had changed in their class composition. These workers were now drawn mainly from amidst the rising lower middle class, a product of the colonial educational apparatus but afflicted with precarious financial security. The leaders felt stifled with continued ideological embargo on law-practice or employment with agencies having government patronage or affiliation. It was scary. The dedicated political workers faced threats from those who had felt threatened due to the movement that was bound to spill over from being against the foreign rulers to confronting the domestic elites. Now he wanted to build a dedicated band of Khadi cadre. Those supporting the national work were paid by their engagement with Khadi process. Thus a cadre dedicated completely to Khadi work unaffected by political vicissitudes was needed. It was necessary to impart 'efficiency and swiftness' in its work.

Political fallout of such a programme was knitting the country into an organization. A successful organization of Khadi network demonstrated India's capacity for self-government. Gandhi insisted that a successful prosecution of Khadi work was proportional to development of national consciousness. An aroused consciousness at mass level could alone win India's freedom. 'If India can demonstrate her capacity for such an achievement by voluntary effort she is ready for political Swaraj.' Spinning wheel did not contribute remuneratively to an individual's income. Yet, same activity performed communally, appreciably enhanced national prosperity. It organically linked each segment of Indians together. It was assumed that universal adoption of Khadi by Indian population would sterilize British economic interest. Last but not least, Khadi was an indispensable preparation for civil disobedience, the

64 'I am interested in the attainment of swaraj only by non-violent and truthful means. This is possible only through a diligent and successful prosecution of the khaddar programme. Swaraj can be peacefully attained only if the whole Indian mass work as with one will, be it on ever so little a constructive and useful thing for ever so little a time. Such an effort presupposes national consciousness.' 'Interrogatories Answered', YOUNG INDIA, January 29 1925, CWMG vol.26: 49.
irresistible weapon in the possession of non-violent struggle.\(^{65}\) Spinning wheel meant a charged national consciousness and a contribution by every individual to a definite constructive work.\(^{66}\)

With the passage of Spinning Resolution at the AICC, the Congress took a step forward from collective action to individual responsibility. Every one of the delegates was required to spin half an hour every day.\(^{67}\) Implementation of Spinning Resolution required momentous organization of the whole network. The collection, transmission and classification of subscription yarn required a large organization and much organizational ability. All India Khadi Board (AIKB) established a most elaborate and uniform scale to measure the subscription-yarn. It constituted a committee of experts to scrutinize quality of yarn. The yarn was to be 'good, well-twisted and uniform'.\(^{68}\) Fifteenth day of every month was the deadline for receiving subscription-yarn at the Board's central office at Ahmedabad. The Board requested

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\(^{65}\) Many a liberals objected to associating Khadi with the preparation for civil disobedience. At that time Gandhi adopted a cautious route and said: 'I have tried to show times without number that no one save civil resisters need think of civil disobedience in connection with khaddar. Civil disobedience has no direct connection with khaddar. ... I have suggested khaddar as indispensable for civil disobedience or Swaraj for two reasons. The first is that swaraj I hold to be an impossibility without khaddar becoming universal in our country. Secondly, it is the most efficient aid to mass discipline without which mass civil disobedience is impossible. Liberals and others should realize that the best way to avert civil disobedience is for everybody to take up the constructive programme of the Congress. If all of us worked with one mind to universalize hand-spun khaddar, swaraj will be within sight.' 'Notes: Liberals and Khaddar', Young India, June 12 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 237.

\(^{66}\) An interviewer from The Hindu asked Gandhi: Is your khaddar programme meant to bring about economic salvation of India, or is it meant to change the mental attitude of the people towards nationalism? If it is the former, then how do you expect swarajya without concerted action for creating nationalism among the people, and, if it is the latter, will the present khaddar programme be sufficient to rouse that feeling among the masses? Gandhi answered: The khaddar programme undoubtedly will bring about the economic salvation of India, if it succeeds. In my opinion, no concerted action is possible for the masses without their realizing their economic salvation. Moreover, the khaddar programme is impossible without concerted action. Thirdly, a successful khaddar programme necessarily means the conversion of Englishmen themselves into nationalists, or, at least, impartial spectators of the Indian movement. They will no longer succeed in holding India under subjection for the purpose of her exploitation.' 'Interview to The Hindu', June 8 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 215.

\(^{67}\) 'So far, the steps we planned to take for securing swaraj were of the nature of collective action and, therefore, no one was fully conscious of his own responsibility. It was a simple matter when one paid some money and had to do nothing else. It was even easier to make speeches. To enrol others was also, comparatively speaking, easy. But to put in regularly, daily without fail, half an hour's honest labour for the sake of the people may seem difficult.' 'Inviolable Pledge', Navajivan, July 27 1924, CWMG vol.24: 458-9.

\(^{68}\) 'Those who spin should not criticize others who do not spin, but should win them over through humility. They should not invite only those who are connected with the Congress, but should appeal even to cooperationists to spin.' 'Inviolable Pledge', Navajivan, July 27 1924, CWMG vol.24: 459.
clock-wise regularity. Punctuality was strictly adhered to. Any slackness caused innumerable inconvenience to the Board management. Provinces were asked to make one complete delivery from month to month. Members were required to send their self-spun yarn in labeled hanks. The label contained information on length and number of strands, its weight in tolas, the count of yarn, kind of cotton used, etc. Hanks were of uniform size and bulk. The sliver-reel circumference was uniform for the purpose of standardizing the count of a given quantity of yarn. Such data was useful in the classification of varieties of cotton available in the country.

Fifteenth of August 1924 was the first deadline for the delegates to send their first installment of the self-spun yarn. When subscription from across the country arrived, it betrayed a stark reality. Majority of delegates, despite their approval at AICC, had failed to abide. In the twenty-provinces that had sent their returns, there were around 12202 eligible delegates. Of these only 1746 delegates sent their self-spun yarn. The percentage of members who complied was only 14 per cent of the names on the register. Rest had gloriously defaulted.

A scrutiny of the subscription was instructive. Most delegates had spun indifferently. Provincial break-ups of return figures exposed Khadi's spatial spread. Gujarat with 42 percent compliance rate was on the top of heap. Bengal took second position. Her success owed much to the work of Khadi Prathisthan and not to the Congress. Bombay's redeeming gesture was that its list included more female than male spinners. Bihar, despite promise, had failed in reaching the tolerable mark of

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70 'Specific instructions for the attention of spinners:
   (1) Each spinner should attach a label on each of his or her hanks and it should contain:
       (a) The length and number of strands in it.
       (b) The weight in tolas.
       (c) The count which may result on calculation.
       These labels are in addition to the main label referred to, containing name, etc., of the spinners.
   (2) All hanks should be of uniform size and bulk.
   (3) Every hank should contain two or more leases in it, which is done by passing a piece of strong string round each skein of 80 or 100 or more strands and crossing the string after each successive skein in the hank.
   (4) It would be better to write down on the card attached to the bundle the kind of cotton used. It will give an opportunity to the collector of the yarn of knowing the varieties used in the different provinces and of instructing as to the counts to be drawn from a given variety.' 'First in the Field', YOUNG INDIA, July 31 1924, CWMG vol.24: 483.

71 'First in the Field', YOUNG INDIA, July 31 1924, CWMG vol.24: 483.

Despite elaborate instructions, members had not taken care in spinning or sending the yarn properly. 'Members have been found to send unwound yarn pulled off the spindle. It is most difficult to treat it after it is so pulled off. If it is to be of use for weaving it must be hanked and properly leased.' 'Notes: The Coming Fifteenth', YOUNG INDIA, September 11 1924, CWMG vol.25: 113.
quantity and quality. Similar was the report card of Punjab. Gujarat and Tamil Nadu showed uniformly practiced spinning. The return figures were also a study in the mentality of Congressmen. It was clear that the members found it easier to pay than work for Congress membership. The figures of return were sufficient proof for the same. Gandhi called for the voluntary resignations. An august delegate wrote back in disgust, 'Today it is the spinning-wheel or the resignation. Tomorrow it may be “cook your own meal or resign”, or it may be “shave your heads clean or resign”. I distrust the philosophy of the Charkha. I distrust it just as much as Mahatma Gandhi trusts it. It is his hobby. I am not going to submit to the resolution nor am I going to resign. Let the committee expel me.' Gandhi's answer was simple. 'Full khaddar programme is', Gandhi wrote while answering the critics, 'to me full Swaraj'.

Many individual members did make valiant effort at spinning. Jawaharlal Nehru not only sent his quota of yarns but sent it most. Rajendra Prasad was to spin the best of yarn from Bihar. Muhammad Ali, the then Congress president, learnt spinning. 'Big Brother' Shakaut Ali, with his heavy body, found spinning difficult but still met his target. Dr Ansari soon achieved enough proficiency in Khilafat office to be called as an expert spinner. Sarojini Naidu, despite suffering from a bad heart, struggled 'with her spinning wheel, with a determination to learn it and do it regularly'. According to religion over 40 Muslims and as many Parsis sent in their quota. While 104 members of the AICC sent in their yarn, all but 3 of the Working Committee members did the same. The day was clearly won by non-members who overwhelmingly outnumbered the official-delegates. Of the most noted ones outside the A.I.C.C. to send their yarn were Maulana Abdul Bari and P. C. Ray. Although AICC resolution had made it obligatory upon its delegates alone to spin regularly, it was also an invitation to the country to adopt the same. People were exhorted to organize spinning clubs in their respective regions. The regional study showed that

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72 'There were 429 packets received. 50 contain over twisted and indifferently spun yarn.' 'Under the test', YOUNG INDIA, September 4 1924, CWMG vol.25: 79-82.

73 'The spinning resolution is proving a remarkable study in the mentality of Congressmen. It required a resolution of the A.I.C.C. to make Congressmen understand that for hand-spinning to be universal, it was the duty of at least Congress representatives not only to learn but to practice spinning.' 'Two Sides', YOUNG INDIA, August 28 1924, CWMG vol.25: 50.


75 'The half-hour drill', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 189)

76 'Any person with sufficient knowledge and energy may organize a spinning club. It requires very little outlay of money. A little storing of cotton, preparing and distribution of slivers and collecting yarn is all that is required. Not much space is required. The poorest can attempt the
the yarn delivery was directly proportional to the intensity of Khadi work in the region. Most of those who had sent their quota had direct link with and were loyal to Gandhi's Khadi programme. It was notable that the highest count reached was 100 (higher the counts finer the yarn). Indian textile mills then did not spin more than 40 counts. The next month's figures of yarn-return showed some improvements as number of those who had sent their quota almost doubled. There were a total of 4908, up from earlier month's 2780, people who fulfilled their obligation by sending the yarn.

But as a 'measure of discipline', spinning resolution failed to register in the consciousness of Congressmen. Quantity was not the only thing aimed at. Each individual spinner was to personally identify with the poor. Yet, some of the delegates had not hesitated to send mill-yarn as part of their constitutional obligation. Some even argued that if question was that of cloth self-sufficiency, they be allowed to don garments manufactured by the Indian textile mills. Still others asked permission to send yarn spun by proxy-spinners. Boredom borne of enforced regularity took its toll even on those who initially sent in their yarn.

work. The wheel-less spinning answers where a spinning-wheel is unobtainable.' Notes: Non-Representatives', Young India, September 11 1924, CWMG vol. 25: 114.

'The percentage of members complying with the resolution is only 14 per cent of the names on the register. Apologies for poor returns have been received from almost all the provinces.' A Study in figures, YOUNG INDIA, August 28 1924, CWMG vol.25, 48-9.

'Notes: Spinning month by month', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 185)

According to Gandhi the principal causes for shortfall in the spread of Khadi were:
1.Idleness 2. Lack of proficiency 3. Apathy for the miseries of the poor. Importantly, Gandhi did not mention dearness and coarseness as they were two oft-quoted complaints against Khadi. 'Causes of failure', Navajivan, September 14 1924, CWMG vol.25: 141.

'Each one of us has personally to identify himself with the poor, when the idea is to set a personal example and when we want to make a knowledge of the art so universal that by the simple system we can make hand-spun cheap enough to compete with the machine-spun cloth.' 'Notes: Not by Deputy', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 152.

'It may be stated here that one or two spinners have not hesitated to send mill-spun yarn. I hope that these gentlemen have done so not knowing what they had to do. There is no difficulty in detecting mill-spun yarn. The virtue lies not in sending any yarn but in sending good even yarn of one's own spinning.' 'Notes: The Coming Fifteenth', YOUNG INDIA, September 11 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 113)

'I have no doubt that even mill-made cloth should be disallowed for the purposes of Congress membership as long as Khadi and the spinning-wheel do not become widespread.' 'Causes of failure', Navajivan, September 14 1924, CWMG vol.25: 143.

'Notes: Not by Deputy', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 152.

Inviolable Pledge, Navajivan, July 27 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 458-9)
The return-figures disheartened Gandhi. 'If delegates do not fulfill their pledge, what hope should be entertained from the general public', Gandhi bared his heart.85 'Is it much use my presiding if the returns remain as poor as they are', he wrote Rajagopalachari referring to the talk of his impending presidency of Congress. There was marked despondency in his tone when he further wrote, 'Will it not then be better to retire from the Congress...? Is it any use having a vote for the wheel from persons clad in foreign stuff?'86 He conceded that he had no fight left in him.87 If Congress was to convince the country to boycott foreign cloth and wear Khadi its leadership must first show allegiance to Khadi. Any other contrary course was a delusion. The biggest battle that Gandhi faced was from Swarajists who relentlessly pursued their idea of Council entry. No leading Swarajists had sent any yarn as part of the constitutional obligation.88 It was a piquant situation. Swarajists, as Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, neither spun nor permitted Gandhi's withdrawal from Congress.89 They were impatient with Gandhi's attempt at limiting the national agenda to the programme of Khadi. Their argument was it would be a long wait for freedom if liberation struggle was led simultaneously with the implementation of constructive programme.

Spinning Resolution unfolded with unintended consequences. Gandhi was aware that many possessed no faith in spinning resolution and yet he persisted in its advocacy. It inaugurated a slew of resignations from Congress Committees.90 Out of the marked respect or due to sheer disgust for the resolution many members resigned. Inevitably, it led to bitter rivalry among the factions.91 Each rival group derided

85 'First test, Navajivan August 24 1924, CWMG vol.25: 31.
86 'I have thought deeply over your letters but feel sure that I must retire from any such contest.' 'Letter to C Rajagopalachari', August 24 1924, CWMG vol.25: 149.
87 'I do not propose to fight the Swarajists at the forthcoming Congress. Nor do I wish to fight the Moderates. I have no terms or my only terms are the beggar's bowl. I ask the Swarajist, the Moderate, the Liberal, the Conventionist to throw into it yarn of their own spinning.' 'Notes: When will it end?', YOUNG INDIA, September 4 1924, CWMG vol.25: 76.
88 'No yarn has been received from any of the leading Swarajists.' Letter to Fulchand Shah, September 13 1924, CWMG vol.25: 132.
89 'I had a long chat with the Poona Swarajists. They will not agree to spin and they will not agree to my leaving the Congress. They do not realize that I shall cease to be useful as soon as I cease to be myself. It is a wretched situation but I do not despair.' 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', September 15 1924, CWMG vol.25: 148.
90 Notes: A Difficulty, YOUNG INDIA, August 7 1924, CWMG vol.24: 521.
91 'My own opinion is that the constitution has broken down. We have no electorate worth the name. Where there is a respectable number on the roll, it is not of those who take a lively interest in the
others' political sagacity and pricked at opponents' integrity. The political atmosphere was laden with mutual suspicion and distrust. The schism led to the grounding of the Congress organization. Its constitution collapsed. Its electoral college shrunk. The functioning of the Committees plummeted. There were leaders but, as Gandhi said, 'We are a self-appointed electorate and self-appointed representatives.'

Gandhi however was unperturbed. It was a challenge to trim the Congress into a political organization that gave sharp and effective response. It was a war time. He was a soldier and he knew his strategy best. His weapon, that was Congress, needed whetting. Khadi was that sharpening tool. Congress was to be a vehicle for Khadi. For the year of his presidency, he wanted no action but those revolving around Khadi. That threatened Congress' principal political character. Swarajists, as representative of 'politicized class', were not sympathetic to such conception.

With schism widening, Gandhi contemplated surrender to Swarajist. He wrote to Motilal, the leader of opposing party, offering to surrender 'almost' on latter's terms. The "almost" was necessary, he said, because there were few things he held 'dearer than life and all the ties of the world.' However, his truce offer appeared more conditional than a concession. He refused any dilution of Khadi agenda. He favoured suspension of moribund non-co-operation programme by lifting embargo on Council-entry and Court-practice. During the period of suspension, Congress was to confine solely to the spread of Khadi and boycott of foreign clothes.

But what Gandhi conceded from left hand, he grabbed it back from the right. His second proposal was to abolish the four-anna franchise. The alternative he suggested was more stringent Spinning Franchise. It required monthly contribution of self-spun yarn as a membership qualification. Further, each Congress member was to

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92 Congress proceedings.'Notes: When will it end?', YOUNG INDIA, September 4 1924, CWMG vol.25: 76.

93 'Impartiality is possible only when the electorate is large, intelligent and independent.' 'Notes: When will it end?', YOUNG INDIA, September 4 1924, CWMG vol.25: 76.

94 'I agree with you that it is better to leave the Congress if we cannot enforce our programme. I cannot help feeling that we must not embarrass the Swarajists. They are supplying a felt want. They do represent a large section of people who want petty relief. Ours is predominantly a spiritual activity. Its strength is developed unperceived and not by merely debating and vote-taking.' 'Letter to C Rajagopalachari', September 15 1924, CWMG vol.25: 149.

compulsorily wear Khadi. The suspension of non-co-operation programme gave freedom of profession, particularly to vocal lawyers. The proposal of Spinning Franchise was to debar anyone unwilling to spin from primary membership. The majority of those affected by this twist in the franchise were to be Swarajists. They could legitimately fight Council elections and claim Congress membership. But for such claim to become real they had to endure the ordeal of Spinning Franchise. It made it sure that Khadi retained its primacy.

Gandhi was securing Congress for the Khadi work. 'I see no other way of making the Congress organization a real and living thing, nor can I see any hope for the poor of India without the spinning-wheel', he argued. It was his intention that 'Day by day the Congress should become a purer and a stronger organization.' Not for anything he was called Mahatma. 'You regard me as a Mahatma... on account of my deep attachment for the poorest of the poor.... That is why you feel that Gandhi counts for something.' His argument was that 'this is the work of internal development without which there will be no effective external political pressure.'

Swarajists were to canvass council election as an arm of Congress. But the parent body itself remained committed to three-fold programme, with Khadi leading the list. He had resorted to ideological cleansing of the Congress. He expected some obstacle to his proposed alteration in the basic franchise of the Congress. 'I hope you will see that', Motilal was told, 'if we all believe in khaddar even as an economic necessity, the acceptance of my proposition is a necessity.' He needed a 'compact disciplined Congress' before national struggle was again waged. The results of spinning resolution had shown that the Congress members preferred resignations to

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95 The Realities, YOUNG INDIA, September 11 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 121)
96 'First test', Navajivan August 24 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 31-4)
97 Speech at Excelsior Theatre, Bombay, 31 August 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 59)
98 'The Congress will neither help nor hinder other organizations but the latter should all, if their members are Congressmen, help the Congress programme. Conversely, Congressmen who believe in many other things not prohibited by the Congress may join other organizations for their other activities....' 'Letter to Motilal Nehru, August 30 1924, CWMG vol.25: 53-5.
99 Other two were forging of Communal Unity and eradication of Untouchability
100 'No more of domestic wrangling for me.' Letter to Motilal Nehru, August 30 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 53-5)
spinning. His adamancy further reduced Congress membership to a miniscule. Gandhi said he was scarcely bothered. 'I do not care how small that organization is.'

However, Gandhi knew his algebra well. Each aspiring person was to send 24,000 yards of self-spun yarn annually to retain Congress membership. The numbers of those who had sent their yarn in the second month had doubled to five thousand. If the momentum caught on, an enormous amount of yarn could be collected every month and that too free of cost. Gandhi hoped for just two lakh enfranchised members of the Congress down from a crore that he had targeted at Vijaywada in early 1921. On an average each province was to register ten-thousand spinner-members. On first reading, the figure was not disproportionate discouraging. It was pregnant with a 'living Congress organization'. The spindle could spur an organization.

Gandhi's proposal to precipitate the national energy on spinning alone found many a detractors. He was told that he was putting cart before the horse. India need to be prepared before it adopted such a franchise. Even his closest friends like Andrews were skeptical of his arguments. Gandhi's insistence, Andrews said, could open a new dogma; a creed with spinning and wearing Khadi as its essential elements. He pleaded for conviction than force in making Congress accept the logic of Spinning Franchise. Gandhi's proposal however was neither original nor ridiculous. There were

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101 'There is at the present moment a note of despondency in the air over the number of Congress members. The complaint is that the members have been never so few as today.' 'Quantity V. Quality', Young India, April 30 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 566.

102 'Give me a compact disciplined Congress, and I can see my way again to answering Government action with popular action. But till then, and till Hindus and Mussalmans speak with one mind and till we show substantial work about khaddar and untouchability, I for one see no prospect of any effective direct action.' 'Letter to Motilal Nehru', October 30 1924, CWMG vol.25: 270.

103 'The number of the second month is double the number of the first month. If every worker in every province properly organizes this voluntary spinning, we must have a steady increase in the spinners. We should not be surprised to find the figure of two lakhs being reached in a few months. Two lakhs means ten thousand for each province. It does not need extraordinary organizing ability to register ten thousand voluntary spinners in each province on an average.' 'No work, No vote', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 205.

104 'My proposal therefore that everyone henceforth who desires to belong to the Congress organization should have some labour for the nation to his credit is neither original nor ridiculous. My proposal seems to jar, because we have not been used to toil with our hands and find it difficult to appreciate the possibilities of a whole nation voluntarily giving half an hour's labour to a single national necessity.' 'No work, No vote', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 205.
precedents. Soviets had 'no work, no vote' formula enshrined in constitution. French had compulsory military training for citizens. Gandhi was not seeking pecuniary qualification met through four-anna payment. He was asking for labour-contribution—a thirty-minute daily spinning schedule. He argued that the system of franchise, by their very nature, was exclusive. He was prepared to offer free cotton to members who objected to increased liabilities. He said 'The nation is not dying for want of raw products, but it is dying for want of labour and minimum skill.' The Spinning Franchise was 'the widest intelligent franchise the world has ever seen.' For it gave statutory recognition to the dignity of labour.

In November 1924, Gandhi signed a pact with Swaraj Party represented by its apex leaders, Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das. The pact statement drew mainly from his proposal to Nehru which was unilateral gesture at bridging the breach. As laid down in his letter to Nehru, the truce statement declared suspension of non-cooperation movement and acceptance of Spinning Franchise. It looked as if Gandhi had had his way. But biggest step-down for him was on Spinning Franchise

105 The qualification under the Soviet constitution is not money, not even four annas, not landed property, not even education, but honest labour. Thus the Soviet Congress is a worker's Congress. The philosophers, the professors, and all others must do some labour.' 'No work, No vote', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 205.

106 'If you could visualise, as I can, the supreme need of the hour which is to give India's starving millions a chance to earn their bread with joy and gladness, you would not object to the Spinning Franchise. I take the Congress to be a body of men and women who accept the paramount necessity of spinning. Why should it not ensure the integrity of membership in the body by making it compulsory for every member to spin? What can be better persuasion than that every member of the Congress spins regularly a certain quantity of yarn every month? How would it be honest for the Congress members to ask people to spin, when they do not spin themselves?' 'Discussion with G Ramachandran', YOUNG INDIA, November 13/20 1924, CWMG vol.25: 254.

107 I have purposely called my proposal the lowest common measure, not the highest. And the lowest does not mean the lowest acceptable to the whole of India, but the lowest necessary for the national achievement. And I hold that, if we are to achieve Swaraj by bloodless methods, the three things mentioned by me are absolutely necessary.' 'No work, No vote', YOUNG INDIA, September 25 1924, CWMG vol.25: 204.


109 'The Congress should suspend the programme of non-co-operation as the national programme, except in so far as it relates to the refusal to use or wear cloth made out of India. Congress should repeal Article VII of the Congress Constitution and should substitute the following therefor: No one shall be a member of any Congress Committee or organization who is not of the age of 18 and who does not wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar at political and Congress functions or while engaged in Congress business, and does not make a contribution of 2,000 yards of evenly spun yarn per month of his or her own spinning or in case of illness, unwillingness or any such cause alike quantity of yarn spun by any other person.' 'Joint Statement with Swaraj party leaders', YOUNG INDIA, November 13 1924, CWMG vol.25: 289.
itself. The statement admitted to the change in the character of Congress Franchise. But it freed from franchise obligation all those who feigned 'illness or unwillingness' for refusing to spin. Such persons could send the required quantity of yarn spun by a proxy. Khadi too was to be worn only on the occasions that had direct Congress link. Rest of the time accountability, self or imposed, could melt into the hazy rationality of moral-game.

It was a compromise formula that was to hatch dishonesty in an honest effort. If Gandhi was 'caught in a whirlpool of doubt', his close comrades found it a shocking step-down.\(^{110}\) To them, Gandhi had given too much. His duty, he said, was to sacrifice to an extent that would force (shame?) opponent into submission. It was Gandhi's 'ethics of giving': give till the receiver is satisfied. Was it equivalent of inducing piety into the opponent through self-flagellation? Psychiatric should say. But the pact rendered the spinning franchise as toothless as Gandhi's earlier compromise a few months ago had ripped spinning resolution of substance. If one conceded the right to unwillingness on as vital an aspect as fulfillment of organizational franchise, why put any condition on membership at all? The pact reduced wearing Khadi into a ritual. Like all rituals, wouldn't Khadi too, in due course, be ringed by pretension, fraud and hierarchy?

But the prime question is: What was the need for Gandhi to surrender if he held the reign of crowd response in his hand? Why did he stoop to conquer those who would not materially affect his programme of action? He had gained nothing. Instead, his backward bending had legitimised Khadi's opponents. They could now legitimately occupy the position of importance in the Congress hierarchy. Gandhi had unwittingly introduced an element of sabotage within his programme even before it was brought into practice. Further, by admitting the right to council entry and law-practice, Gandhi was administering legitimacy to twin programme that had attracted much of his ire during the non-cooperation.

Answer to such question lies in the unenviable positioning of his leadership and politics. Gandhi was much torn by the possibility of split, fragmentation, and

\(^{110}\) 'You feel that I have surrendered a great deal, that I have turned Khadi into a kind of ritual. However, that is not so at all.' 'Discussion with No-changers', Navajivan, November 16 1924, CWMG vol.25: 292.
dissipation. He carried the campaign only so far as to bring into fore the Council-Charkha conflict. But he refused to sharpen the conflict to the breaking threshold. Historical memory was too fresh in him. In 1920, liberals and the followers of Besant had left Congress voicing agenda contrary to that of the non-cooperation. The followers of Tilak formed the main bulwark of Swaraj Party. Swarajists were a growing party. They represented a very strong body of public opinion in favour of Council-entry. Their leadership constituted of most educated people, 'the best intellect' in the country. And, this influential section of the public opinion was ranged against Gandhi's Khadi, his 'sword'. National struggle, Gandhi confessed in a pragmatic mood, was impossible unless 'the intellect' actively supported it. 'We have to practice toleration, if for nothing else, at least for this purpose that we must have all the parties represented on the Congress.'

Seemingly, the fact that Swarajists agreed to wear Khadi on ceremonial occasions satisfied Gandhi. Clinging to this straw, Gandhi yielded to all round defiance. He explained his climb-down: 'Is it a sin to spin? But ...it is wrong that we should divide our ranks on this point. I have affection for the spinning-wheel, but there are other countrymen of ours who have real disinclination to spin.' If breach led to severance, it could adversely retard the national movement. It was this historical responsibility that explained the pact and the sacrifice and the 'ethics of giving'. He regarded the Pact as a 'boldest experiment' in non-violence.

But it was not pure morality; there was a practical side too. In introducing compulsory garb of Khadi (even if limited only to Congress occasions) and Spinning Franchise (even if watered down by 'unwillingness' clause), Gandhi was actually moved by a set of twin concerns. Khadi's tardy quality and sagging consumption had been continuing concern for its proponents. In some little way, his move was to spur

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111 'From the No-changers' standpoint, the first thing to be noticed in the agreement is the equal status of the Swaraj Party that has been gained between the Swaraj Party and the No-changers in this agreement.[sic] I venture to say that it is their right to get equal status with the No-changers. 'Speech at AICC meeting', Bombay, November 23 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 350-1)

112 'Besides the Swarajists, there are the Liberals, the Independents, the Conventionists. They are all ranged against the No-changers programme.' 'Speech at AICC meeting', Bombay, November 23 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 351)

113 'I must convert or be converted or retire. Bardoli was the boldest experiment in non-violence in one direction. The agreement is the boldest experiment in non-violence in another direction. I do not regret Bardoli because I had the courage to retrace my steps. I hope I shall have less reason to regret this step.' 'Letter to C Rajagopalachari', November 14-15 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 324)
the production and consumption. He still got his yarn whether members spun by self or bought it off the shelf. And the members still had to buy Khadi even if it was worn only on the ceremonial occasions. Khadi had made a substantial growth. From the days of vain vows, the movement had come to a stage when spinning and Khadi-wearing were conditions for franchise. He had struck to basics and was contented.\(^{114}\) His contentment was often infectious. It also mollified the aggrieved loyalists.

Khadi was also a product of Gandhi’s basic political philosophy. A firm believer in man’s capacity to transcend limitations, Gandhi’s technique of social change was through transformation of human heart. He wrote open letters to ruling Englishmen so as to affect their heart. He claimed to have discovered that man is superior to the system that he propounds.\(^{115}\) Therefore, to G. D. Birla, a textile mill magnate, Gandhi sent a Charkha, ‘specially made for you’.\(^{116}\) Khadi’s own brand-building exercise was much dependent on the appeal to heart. To convince his countrymen Gandhi left no ‘stone unturned’ to practice what he preached. When he asked people to discard their foreign cloth, he knew that millions were too poor to buy khaddar as replacement. He, therefore, advised them to be satisfied with mere loin-cloth. To show what he meant, in September 1921, Gandhi decided to discard his vest and made himself content with ‘only a loin-cloth and a chaddar whenever necessary for the protection of the body’.\(^{117}\) Earlier, on August 31 1920, he had taken the vow

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\(^{114}\) However, his satisfaction was more an outcome of self-belief than actual ground reality. It was not that Gandhi was totally innocent. ‘I know that many of them are not enthusiastic about the proposed alteration of the franchise’, Gandhi wrote of Swarajists in an article titled ‘May God Help’. In November at Ahmedabad AICC meet they had voted for franchise alteration despite strong reservations that spoke eloquently by their silence. ‘May God help’, YOUNG INDIA, November 27 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 356)

\(^{115}\) And so I feel that you as an individual are infinitely better than the system you have evolved as a corporation. Hence it is that an Englishman in office is different from an Englishman outside. Similarly, an Englishman in India is different from an Englishman in England. Here in India, you belong to a system that is vile beyond description. It is possible, therefore, for me to condemn the system in the strongest terms, without considering you to be bad and without imputing bad motives to every Englishman. ‘To Every Englishman In India’, Young India, July 13 1921, (CWMG vol.20, 366)

\(^{116}\) ‘The charkha that I got specially made for you has arrived. It is certainly very fine to look at. Bhai Mahadev and I have both tried it; it works very well. I wonder if anyone at our place can set it up properly. Please let me know how it works. I had asked Chi. Maganlal to send one more charkha; I do not know if it has reached you.’ ‘Letter to GD Birla’, February 28 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 210)

\(^{117}\) Gandhi explains that change came out of conviction and was gradual in coming. It was at Madura, in September 1921, that he brought such a ‘radical alteration’ in his dress. But before that, twice he had come close to adopt loin-cloth, each time he had restrained himself. First was when he was shaken by famine-stricken Khulna. The second occasion was when Mohammed Ali was arrested.
for life to purchase only Khadi cloth hand made of hand spun yarn, 'cap or head-dress and socks excepted'.  

The pact was just a truce-statement. It needed ratification in the general assembly of the Congress. It was held at Belgaum in late December 1924. Gandhi presided over the session. Man who was at the periphery in 1919 was now at the apex of the organization. It was nobody's charity that he was there. He was there because of the single-point agenda, most determinedly pursued since 1919. It was to achieve Swaraj for the millions; a Swaraj that meant not just freedom to indulge in political demagoguery but in which economic freedom held equal importance.

Gandhi presided over the annual Congress when 'a gulf seems to be yawning between educated India and myself'. There was a solitary item on the agenda, it may be said, namely, adoption of spinning as an essential ingredient of franchise. Vithalbhai Patel asserted that majority of the Congressmen (90%, in Patel's opinion) were not in favour of the new franchise. Patel told Gandhi that he (Gandhi) was taking a fatal step. Gandhi called for a straightforward rejection of his proposed changes if such was the majority opinion. 'I must warn you against accepting this change simply to please me. You must vote according to your conscience.'

More than the arithmetic, it was operation of franchise that weighed Gandhi down. His appeal to the Congress voters to vote according to their conscience was dictated by this concern. He wanted active allegiance and not passive voting. 'Reject it if it does not appeal to your reason. I do not want to appeal to your heart. I want to appeal to your cold reason.' But when he grew desperate with their cold shoulder he pleaded, 'Accept it even for the sake of discipline. Accept it as an article of faith.'

During his Madras tour he was told about the scarcity in Khadi availability and lack of people's purchasing power. He discussed among his co-workers such as Maulana Azad Sobhani, Rajagopalachariar, Doctor Rajan and others before taking the decision. 'Message on Loin-cloth, Madura, September 22 1921, (CWMG vol.21, 181)

'He had heard a Mussalman saying that Mahatmaji must have gone mad to expect that the Mussalmans would at all take to khaddar.' 'Speech at Khilafat Conference, Patna', September 22 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 215).

Of course he had many of those 'educated Indians' too as his supporters. And they wanted him to control the reign of Congress at this critical juncture.

'Speech at Subjects Committee Meeting', Belgaum, December 23 1924, CWMG vol.25: 451.

'The duty of the No-changers is to prove to the Swarajists the value of the spinning-wheel.'
Gandhi asked Congress to concentrate whole of its energy on the work of construction through Khadi. Congressmen saw Khadi as an instrument to transform the Congress character from that of political to purely a social reform organization.\(^{122}\) Gandhi however thought it differently and said, 'It gives the people political education of a high type.'\(^{123}\) It was not that he abhorred politics but his politics was of different nature. It was dictated by 'love and understanding', which were 'a thousand times more effective than political manoeuvring'. It was this concern that had made inclusion of Khadi in the political agenda. 'I claim my view to be wise and enlightened, and hope that some day you will also hail my advocacy of the spinning-wheel and Khadi as shrewd, wise and enlightened.'\(^{124}\) There was not going to be any compromise on the question of Khadi. He was firm and hopeful when he said, 'First it was hailed with ridicule, then came scorn, and presently it will be received with joy.'\(^{125}\) Chittaranjan Das issued a party-whip to make members fall for voting.\(^{126}\) Number game was ultimately won but implementation of resolution exposed his vulnerability.\(^{127}\)

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\(^{122}\) That should be the propaganda of the No-changers. I made a compromise with the Swarajists in order that they may make the spinning-wheel a living thing. I appeal to the No-changers and the Swarajists to make this wheel propaganda a success. 'Speech at AICC meeting', Bombay, November 23 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 352)

\(^{123}\) 'It has been suggested that this programme turns the Congress into a purely social reform organization. I beg to differ from that view. Everything that is absolutely essential for swaraj is more than merely social work and must be taken up by the Congress. It is not suggested that the Congress should confine its activity for all time to this work only. But it is suggested that the Congress should for the coming year concentrate the whole of its energy on the work of construction, or as I have otherwise described it, the work of internal growth.' 'Presidential Congress', December 26 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 483)

\(^{124}\) 'The task is obviously difficult. If it were easy, it would not be possible to expect the grand result one expects from its successful working. Thus the workers have to keep in continuous touch with the spinners. Therein lies in my opinion the strength of the franchise. It gives the people political education of a high type.' 'How to do it?', YOUNG INDIA, January 1 1925, (CWMG vol.25, 529)

\(^{125}\) 'I claim my view to be wise and enlightened, and hope that some day you will also hail my advocacy of the spinning-wheel and Khadi as shrewd, wise and enlightened. When people mock at me today and describe the spinning-wheel as Gandhi's toy, I pity them, and I am not going to give it up however much they laugh at me. 'Opening Speech at Kathiawar Political Conference', Bhavnagar, January 8 1925, (CWMG vol.25, 565)

\(^{126}\) 'Speech at Samaldas College', Bhavnagar, January 9 1925, (CWMG vol.25, 577)

\(^{127}\) 'Mr. Das wrote to me that so far as the Swarajists were concerned, I could be at ease on this question of the pact, and that Mr. Vithalbhai Patel represented only himself. Mr. Das also wrote that the majority decision of the Swaraj Party was binding on every single member of the Swaraj organization, and would be loyally carried out.' 'Speech at Subjects Committee Meeting', Belgaum, December 23 1924, CWMG vol.25: 451.

\(^{166}\) It was next decided to fix the venue of next Congress in that province which on the population basis showed the best results in connection with khaddar and boycott of foreign-cloth. Yet it was held in Kanpur, which fell in United Provinces. This province, as a recent book shows, was un-
Reports of non-compliance with franchise resolution poured in from across the country. Many claimed to have voted for the sake of 'discipline or unity' but later showed inability to fulfill the conditions. Many district Congress committees reported its unfeasibility. It was said that the spinning franchise endangered the very existence of almost all the executive committees. Gandhi called for 'solid action' and not get shrivel. The non-compliance meant that Congressmen were not just reluctant to spin themselves but even buy hand-spun yarn and submit the required quantity.\textsuperscript{128} Congressmen's defiance of spinning franchise was more to do with their unwillingness and lack of faith in the ability of spinning wheel to win freedom than in logistical bottlenecks.\textsuperscript{129} It was the absence of belief in the potency of spinning wheel.

Gandhi got one year to prove himself. With spinning franchise coming into effect, he was on last of his gamble as far as Khadi was concerned. He adamantly refused to entertain any agenda other than Khadi. He demanded complete subservience of national energy to spinning and propagating Khadi. Against all the warnings he persisted in transforming Congress character into mainly a production and consumption house for Khadi. He asked for Congress to be relieved of its political ambition, at least for the year he was at its helm. He brought alteration into franchise. But all these were to no avail. The signs were not wholly encouraging. At least they were not consummate with the ambition. Congress had been built by a kind of people that now Gandhi wanted to be replaced by his village rustics. Congress recoiled. Membership fell. Gandhi retreated. In just about few months time old franchise was reinstated. But that is going bit ahead in the story. To realize his plans Gandhi left no stone unturned. He took to travel and tour with unparalleled energy and conviction. While he was being opposed in the boardroom politics, his popularity...
among the masses remained intact. He had not moved out since his release in early 1924. That he shall now do with a vengeance. As a salesman of Swaraj, he asked each of Congress volunteers to be self-responsible and daily probe oneself with a catalogue of following questions: 'How many yards of yarn have I spun today? How many people today did I persuade to adopt spinning? How many people did I persuade today to adopt Khadi?'

Gandhi tried to redefine the meaning of public work; to render public work was to spin on Charkha and wear Khadi. 'The object of our public life is to serve the visible God, that is, the poor...go amidst them and ply the spinning-wheel.' No gift of money, garland or coconut satisfied him. His face brightened up when he saw people wearing Khadi. Otherwise, it went damp. 'How good would it be if you wore a sari out of hand-spun yarn?' Asking empathy for the poor was his constant refrain. If in 1920-1, he asked the country to be prepared for jail, now he was asking the same people to devote all their energy to spinning and spreading Khadi. Persuading and enrolling people as members and coaching them in spinning were added to Gandhi's busy schedule.

Immediately after the successful passage of spinning franchise at Belgaum Congress, Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati began to receive orders for spinning-wheels, spindles, slivers, etc. It was institutionally impossible for Ashram to provide for the growing needs of spinning wheel and its accessories to the whole country. The Congress committees at various levels were asked to organize depots for wheels and spinning subsidiaries. In order to enable efficient functioning of the Spinning

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130 It seems that even now the change in voting rights appears terrible to many. This does not surprise me. We are often troubled by a new thing; sometimes it produces fear. I hope that, as time goes by, fear will disappear and people will realize the value of the spinning franchise. Each volunteer should understand his own responsibility. Each one should maintain a diary.' To salesman of Swaraj', Navajivan, January 11 1925, CWMG vol.25: 578.


132 But then he was not just the salesman of Khadi. He was also the nation-builder. Both went hand in hand. He was forging national solidarity when he asked Gujaratis, 'You must not imagine that your country consists of only what lies between the Narmada and Sabarmati'. Poverty was the bonding glue. Speech at Kairiyia Conference, Sojitra, January 16 1925, CWMG vol.26: 6.


134 'Orders are pouring in at the Ashram at Sabarmati for spinning wheels, spindles, slivers, etc. If we were well-organized, such helplessness should be impossible. Time was when every village carpenter could make a spinning-wheel. But the success of hand-spinning depends upon our
Franchise, the All India Khadi Board (AIKB) organized its own network of provincial Boards. It provided members with wheels and slivers. The Board supplied cotton to deficient provinces. It provided training inputs to members on carding, spinning, etc. The Board even took upon itself to provide those 'unwilling' members with hand-spun yarn on suitable price to refrain them from buying spurious yarn from the open bazaar.\textsuperscript{135}

In the month of April, number of members who sent self-spun yarn towards fulfillment of the obligation under Spinning Resolution was 4,862. There were 4,441 members who sent their yarn-subscription under the secondary category of those who did not spin by themselves. In the month of May, the numbers fell drastically. There were 681 members in the first category and 1,884 members under second.

From the figures sent by provinces, details were missing. Provinces even dithered to give any explanation for their violation of Congress constitution. In the month of May only 6 out of 20 provinces furnished information. Kerala never sent any at all. While some provinces were renegade others like Gujarat were trying to add

\begin{itemize}
\item In view of the Congress having made hand-spinning part of the franchise and in order to enable the provincial Committees to receive facilities in the matter, the All-India Khadi Board resolves that it will be prepared to give the following assistance directly as well as through the Provincial Khadi Boards.
\item The Board will be prepared to supply cotton to any province where cotton is not easily available.
\item The Board will be prepared to consider applications for cotton loans on terms to be arranged.
\item This Board advises the Provincial Khadi Boards to render every possible assistance to enable members to get models for making good charkhas and carding-bows and supply all necessary accessories as also to assist in the matter of getting carded slivers until members make their own arrangements.
\item The Board will, so far as possible, arrange for experts to give the necessary tuition in carding, spinning, etc., under arrangements to be made with the Board.
\item The Board will be prepared to buy yarn from any provincial Congress Committee at bazaar rates or to get it woven for the Committees.
\item The Board will be prepared, if so desired, to supply hand-spun yarn at reasonable rates in connection with the yarn required for satisfying the franchise.
\item The Board warns individuals and committees against buying hand-spun yarn from the bazaar for the purpose of the yarn franchise as the bazaar yarn is likely to be mill yarn or spun from mill slivers and not to be even and well-twisted. (It is possible only for experts to distinguish between mill-spun and hand-spun yarn or to say when yarn is well-twisted; even experts will be unable to say when hand-spun yarn is spun from mill-made slivers.)
\item Lastly, the Board will be prepared to give any further information or help to individuals or committees which it is in its power to give.
\end{itemize}

\textit{'Notes: AIKB's Resolution', YOUNG INDIA, January 29 1925, CWMG vol.26: 56.}
their own conditions to franchise. Some 15,355 members sent in their quota. Gandhi confessed his inability to command discipline. 'I used to talk at Belgaum of being exacting in enforcing discipline. I see that I have failed to secure the co-operation of the provincial committees.' Congress constitution provided no sanction against recalcitrant committees. Even if such a clause existed it went against his grain to enforce it. Many workers made promises at Belgaum about the number of self-spinning members they would register before the 1st March 1925. Workers everywhere found the task of recruiting voluntary spinners far more difficult than getting four-anna members. Promises therefore were being broken without any compunction. 'To me the value of the spinning franchise consists in its difficulty due not to want of ability but want of application.' Gandhi laid the blame not on people who were eager but workers who suffered from 'sheer laziness and ignorance'. 'Harvest' was good though 'labourers' were a few.

Gandhi explained his failure to his inability to convince educated India. He admitted Congress was a product of educated Indians. He could therefore not enforce his own convictions upon it without inviting mass withdrawal or reticent adherence. He invited Swaraj Party as representative of politicized, educated Indians to reject spinning franchise. He himself however was unavailable for anything other than

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136 'What is there to prevent us now from attempting or accomplishing all or any of these three things if it is not our own unwillingness, lethargy or worse? I invite you and your friends to give your undoubted ability and energy to this constructive programme and you will see swaraj coming nearer every day.' Notes: On the verge of it, YOUNG INDIA, June 25 1925, CWMG vol.27: 287.

137 'I shall therefore be satisfied with ten thousand Mussalman volunteer spinners spinning every month two thousand yards of good yarn with clock-work regularity.' Notes: 'Not 25,000', YOUNG INDIA, January 22 1925, CWMG vol.26: 23.

138 'Notes: Remember 1st March', YOUNG INDIA, January 19 1925, CWMG vol.26: 163.

139 His diagnosis though was not entirely correct. He himself received many a complaints about the unavailability of spinning implements from diehard enthusiasts. He himself reported of one such complaint: 'A lover of the spinning-wheel from Bombay describes what he had to go through before he secured one. It was with great difficulty that he found a shop selling spinning-wheels. He got one after waiting for two and a half hours. He paid Rs. 4 as, 8 for it and, on returning home, found that the spindle was bent. The spinning-wheel moved by fits and starts and even now it does not work well. Now, this gentleman asks me what he should do.' Gandhi's only answer was that people should be self-supportive and learn how to repair a Charkha. He also advised people to adopt takli for the wheel-less spinning. 'A Spinner's Difficulties', Navajivan, April 5 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 466.

140 'It is not the people that are apathetic. It is the workers, the leaders. They are doing nothing to spread the gospel. The people have not yet developed that liking for khaddar as to make them go out of their way to procure khaddar, but if it is brought to their doors, they would gladly take it. The harvest is indeed such but the labourers are few.' Notes II: An Oasis in the Desert', YOUNG INDIA, March 5 1925, CWMG vol.26: 227.
He was undaunted, 'hardened criminal' that he was. He refused to roll back the franchise alteration on his own. He clung to spinning as franchise qualification just as a mother hugged her infant.

Throughout 1925, Gandhi toured extensively. He carried his spinning wheel even while traveling. He planned tour itinerary with Khadi in view. He plied Charkha while he delivered speeches. In every public meeting he made a passionate appeal for the adoption of Khadi. 'Were our mothers mad that they used to spin?', Gandhi asked a crowd of women at Sojitra in Gujarat almost exasperatedly. He scrutinized his audience's garments and chastised them if he discovered them donning the foreign or mill-made cloths. At places he was given piece of hand-spun, hand-woven quality cloth as a gesture in reception. He auctioned the cloth back into public taking in highest premium. He asked for the contribution into Khadi Fund, urging people to 'give the most that you can and not the least you have'. He was good in exhorting an adoring crowd. But it was just that; much of the time their adoration did

141 'I admit that I do not carry educated India with me in my views on spinning as on several other things. Educated Indians brought the Congress into being and they must dominate and shape its policy. I feel that I represent the mass-mind however inadequately it may be. I am unfit just now for any other work but that of the triple constructive programme. 'Are we ready?', YOUNG INDIA, June 18 1925, CWMG vol.27: 258.

142 I can see no way of making the Congress a truly national organization, responsive to national want and representative of the masses and capable of action at a given moment, without discipline, without the co-operation of all its parts, and without a due sense of responsibility in every member. 'Notes: Latest Returns', YOUNG INDIA, May 28 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 157)

143 It is also my view that we should see that spinning for social benefit does not prove costly instead of helping to make Khadi less costly, that we need not flatter anyone too much and provide facilities which are expensive. If the cost of inducing others to go on spinning is greater than that of the yarn produced, such spinning serves no useful purpose. For that means that in inducing someone to spin, we give him something instead of receiving something from him. This kind of business means bankruptcy. It does not bring the benefit which spinning is supposed to do. 'My Notes: Franchise reduced to Mockery', Navajivan, May 31 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 176)

144 'Ordinarily I carry my spinning-wheel with me when I travel.' 'Reminiscences of Kathiawar II', Navajivan, March 8 1925, CWMG vol.26: 251.

145 I hope that no one will wish to take me to a single place where Khadi is not the attraction. 'Reminiscences of Kathiawar II', Navajivan, March 8 1925, CWMG vol.26: 253.

146 'In Bengal: language of the hand', Navajivan, June 7 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 211)

147 'I accept Khadi as the symbol of virtue. Public work does not mean attendance at meetings, but wearing Khadi—the symbol of purity— and serving the men and women of India. The object of our public life is to serve the visible God, that is, the poor. If you want to serve them, take the name of God, go amidst them and ply the spinning-wheel. If you want to enter public life, render public service, then spin on the charkha, wear Khadi. If your body and mind are pure you will become truly Swadeshi.' Speech at Women's Conference, Sojitra, January 16 1925, CWMG vol.26: 3.
not really translate into action. Bardoli in 1922 measured sufficiently high on Khadi scale as to become the citadel of civil-disobedience. But three years later its inhabitants were equally frosty to donning Khadi. The enthusiasm had waned. Khadi sales had declined.

In March, while traveling in South, Gandhi visited Khadi centres, addressed public meetings as brand-ambassador or inaugurated Khadi and spinning exhibitions. Tirupur was known to be 'khaddar capital'. In some way, Gandhi was the 'khaddar king'. Tirupur Khadi was famous for variety of checks and colours. Women were capable of spinning twenty and finer counts. Although Tirupur Khadi was dearer than the mill-textiles its high-durability discounted the high-price. Yet the district had only a few thousand wheels and looms plying. The sales did not amount to more than three lakhs. Owing to tardy sales, Khadi producing centres turned away the needy woman spinners. In his speeches, Gandhi called the potential customers to buy Khadi. At Cochin he spoke of 'character and not clothing' as a mark of dignity. He was responding to the criticism that Indians had outgrown Khadi.

In the mid-1925 an ailing yet energetic Gandhi toured Bengal. Gandhi stayed for four months in Bengal (from 1 May to 1 September). Upon arriving in

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149 'The municipal address calls this the khaddar capital and calls me the khaddar king. I realize what a poor khaddar king I must be. For this khaddar capital shows no more than ten thousand spinning-wheels and one thousand looms. The sales do not amount to more than three lakhs and a half or thereabouts.' 'Speech in reply to Municipal Address', Tirupur, March 19 1925, CWMG vol.26, 345.
150 'I was delighted to see in the address of the Dewan of Travancore a reference to the spinning-wheel. You have passed in the Assembly a resolution recommending the adoption of the spinning-wheel in the national schools. I congratulate the Assembly upon the resolution, but as I passed through the towns or the cities of Travancore, I must confess to you that I have my misgivings about the success of the introduction of the spinning-wheel in your schools. If I remember rightly, the Dewan has advertised for an expert spinner. I wonder whether it will be possible to get a single expert spinner in Travancore.' 'speech In Reply To Municipal Address', Quilon, March 12, 1925, CWMG vol. 24: 292
151 'Speech at Public Meeting, Cochin, March 8 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 258)
152 He passed through central provinces. He narrates one encounter with public at Nagpur railway station. 'The discarding of khaddar is most noticeable. Instead of a forest of white khaddar caps, I see everywhere the provoking black foreign caps on almost every head. A friend sadly remarked to me that there was hardly one in a thousand who wore khaddar habitually. My faith in khaddar rises as I find this indifference to if not revolt against khaddar. My name on the lips and black caps on the heads,—what a terrible contrast! What a lie! I could not fight the battle of Swaraj with that crowd.' 'Illuminating Documents', April 30 1925, Young India, May 7 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 574-8.
Calcutta in May, Gandhi made his intention very clear. He had come to ascertain the possibility of Khadi in Bengal. His first comments were addressed to 'the millionaires...the barristers, the M.L.A.s and the M.L.C.s...the women of Calcutta'. He asked them to spin 'half an hour, in the name of God, for the sake of perishing and famishing humanity of India.' 153 It was not doles that a famished mass needed. It needed work. In such dire circumstances there was no substitute for hand-spinning industry. It most comfortably suited the village requirement of low investment and technology, easy availability of raw material, and ready-local market. It was pregnant with possibilities when Gandhi compared Charkha with both Kamdhenu as well as Sudarshan Chakra. 154 As Kamdhenu it gave economic aplenty to Indians. And as Sudarshan Chakra, Charkha opened the political door of Swaraj. India's Swaraj was to come only by plodding the trinity of constructive agenda: Khadi, Untouchability and Communal Unity. Communal question proved too intractable for him. 155

153 Speech at Public Meeting, Calcutta, May 1 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 7)
154 Speech at All Bengal Hindu Sammelan, Faridpur, May 2 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 10)
155 In September 1924, at Kohat in North-Western Frontier Province, in a communal riot, was hacked Gandhi's cherished dream of utilising the glue of religion to forge Hindu-Muslim unity. His whole conception of action rested on the premise that India was a country where people were fundamentally religious. This, as far as Gandhi could see, was India's positive legacy derived from her past. Gandhi had a brilliant knack for choosing symbols for his movement which could be identified by maximum number of people. Throughout his career, in South Africa or India, Gandhi displayed this quality of him with a brilliant and enviable success rate. Khilafat wrongs at the hand of Allies was such a symbol. In Khilafat, he saw a God sent opportunity to bind together the Hindu and Muslim population. Although in the beginning it really fetched handsome political dividends, soon it exposed its limitation bringing the castle crashing down. However much religious underpinnings it might be having, the question of Khalifa, for the majority of the Muslim India, was of fleeting interest. It concerned, strangely enough, only those at 'modern' Aligarh Muslim University and 'orthodox' Deoband, with sprinkling from here and there. Majority of the Muslim India, inhabiting on the margin of starvation, was too much engrossed eking out its living to get fired by wrongs to Khalifa. Moreover, as later events in Turkey showed, the issue was not that fiery as it was made out to be in India. Attempt to forge fraternal fissure with alien adhesive naturally failed. Kohat was not the first chink that had appeared in the armour of Hindu-Muslim unity. Earlier, murderous Moplas had exposed its limitations mercilessly. Kohat, therefore, was a tragedy. A tragedy not in the sense that the town was caught in the melee of mutual massacre. It was the tragedy in the sense that it put the final nail on Gandhi's attempt to draw religious backing to his action agenda. It brought to an end an unprecedented political comradeship that Gandhi had forged with Ali brothers. Gandhi had an inkling of its coming. Never, never again, Gandhi would show same intensity as he had shown in last six years on the question of Hindu-Muslim Unity. His desperate concern for partition riots was impelled by his humanitarians concern.

But, it remains to be said, to the credit of Gandhi, that his religion was beyond the scriptural dogma. Neither was his God the creation of the dogmatic religion. 'To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience.' 'God and Congress', Young India, 5 March 1925, (CWMG vol.24, 224) Scriptures were unimportant when it came to human reason. Two incident brought out this aspect vividly. Disturbed that two Ahmadiya Muslims were stoned to death in Afghanistan as penalty for apostasy, Gandhi questioned the 'morality of the method'. He
Untouchability pulled him with greater intensity though focus was yet very much dispersed. It was Khadi that had prime focus from him.\textsuperscript{156}

‘Give me the spinning-wheel and I will spin Swaraj for India’, Gandhi spoke at Faridpur. ‘That is the finest revolution that I know for India. I know that some of you laugh. But the finest testimony that will be given to me will be that I revived the cult of Charkha—that Gandhi gave the simple message of the rustic when he asked us to spin—that he spoke in terms of Swaraj for the masses and millions of his downtrodden countrymen when he delivered the message of Charkha.\textsuperscript{157} These were not hardcore political issues. Politics was left for Swaraj Party to feed. Congress was for constructive work alone.

The visit to Bengal if it contained occasional depressing notes also held high points. In Gandhi’s own words he did not find ‘a climate of opposition to Khadi’.\textsuperscript{158} If Khadi grew at tardy pace it was due to the absence of ‘desire to spin and use Khadi and an organization to create and cater for the desire’.\textsuperscript{159} Politically, Bengal was a

\textsuperscript{156} ‘It is sad that it should still be necessary to explain how politics is linked with yarn. The collective strength of the people lies in spinning yarn. I am convinced that its invisible power will influence everything.’ ‘Reminiscences of Kathiawar II’, Navajivan, March 8 1925, CWMG vol.26: 253.

\textsuperscript{157} My future is ensured so long as I swear by the charkha and I promise to you that [even if] everyone of the audience here, including Deshbandhu Das, says: “Gandhi is wrong; charkha is nothing, it is an idiotic thing in this age of machinery and speed”, I will still say the same thing up to the very last breath of my life: “Give me the spinning-wheel and I will spin swaraj for India.” You will not get swaraj for India on any other terms.’ ‘Speech at Bengal Provincial Conference’, Faridpur, May 3 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 32)

\textsuperscript{158} ‘Here I did not find a climate of opposition to Khadi. The No-changers and Swarajists both use Khadi, some more some less. I came across only three persons who said that the spinning-wheel would not help, and they too were not leading men. Here Moderates and extremists all use Khadi a little more or a little less.’ Spinning in Bengal, Navajivan, May 31 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 179)

\textsuperscript{159} The best charkha they had yet got available in the market was the charkha of the Khadi Pratisthan. \textit{Speech At Mymensingh}, May 19, 1925. A Workers' difficulty, YOUNG INDIA, May 21 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 79)
Swarajist citadel. Almost all the Congress organizations were under its control. Gandhi's Khadi had few takers in its political arena. Chittaranjan Das himself was perceived as a man opposed to spinning franchise. Due to non-compliance with spinning franchise, Congress membership in the province had fallen drastically. There was also a simultaneous campaign for the abolition of Spinning Franchise. Gandhi spoke of the spinning franchise as the only method to sieve genuine members from the counterfeits. At the popular level, Gandhi discovered, there was enough enthusiasm. It was the faith in leaders that were lacking.

At Dacca, Gandhi was provoked into rhetoric when some students present in the meeting insinuated that spinning was much waste of time, energy and took no count of the principle of division of labour. 'Do I ask you to do spinning for the whole of the day? Do I ask you to take it up as a substantive occupation? Spinning programme lacked any excitement for the student audience. 'Death on the gallows we can gladly embrace, but spinning is an impossibility'. 'You say there is no fun in spinning. But I ask you, is there any fun in reciting the gayatri? Is there any fun in reciting the kalma? ...Spinning is a duty and a sacrament.' In a meeting with Zamindars at Mymensingh Gandhi said, 'If you have your own dhobi, your own scavenger, why don’t you have your own weaver?' In a speech at Santiniketan, Gandhi asked the inmates not to give up 'your poetry, literature or music.' All that he asked for was half an hour every day plying of charkha.

Gandhi was eager to convert Chittaranjan Das to his cause. Around June 13, Gandhi wrote extolling the virtues of spinning and pleading with him to spin. 'I do want you to learn spinning both at the wheel and the takli.' He even arranged an

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160 Do your hearts overflow with love at the sight of your famished countrymen? By spinning, my friends, you demonstrate your love for them. You spin and you make them shake off their idleness. Talk to Students at Dacca, May 17 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 122)

161 'If you want to save India, do it by doing the little that I ask for, I warn you. Take up the wheel betimes, or perish.' 'Talk to Volunteers', Jalpaiguri, June 10 1925, CWMG vol.27: 215.

162 'If you have your own dhobi, your own scavenger, why don’t you have your own weaver?' 'Talk to Zamindars', Mymensingh, May 19 1925, CWMG vol.27: 128.

163 'I do not ask you to give up your poetry, literature or music. All I ask is that, side by side with these pursuits, you give half an hour every day to the charkha. No one has till now advanced the excuse that he does not have even half an hour to spare. The charkha will help us overcome our narrowness.' 'Speech at Santiniketan', May 31 1925, CWMG vol.27: 181.

164 'If the Governor said, 'Spin and take what you want', you will work at the wheel for twenty-four hours and master it. Well, it is not the Governor who is saying it; but one who loves you and loves
expert spinner to teach him. On June 16 Das collapsed to an illness. He did not learn spinning though in the end he tried valiantly to satisfy Gandhi. It was Chittaranjan Das who was the figurehead of all those who opposed Gandhi on his Charkha ideology. Yet, immediately after his death, Gandhi constituted a Memorial Fund in the name of departed leader solely for the purpose of propagating Khadi. Das was appropriated suitably not only to mollify his faithful but also to further Khadi cause by brandishing him as one converted to the ideology. 165 Gandhi gave prominent space in his speeches and writings to the last-day conversion of Das. Das, Gandhi said, was a habitual wearer of Khadi even if he did not learn spinning. His whole family knew spinning. And, in her solitude, Basanti Devi, the widow of Chittaranjan, was drawing solace from spinning. It reminded of how, after Tilak's death, he had claimed Lokmanya's approval for his non-cooperation programme. Tilak had laid the foundation of national aspiration when he belligerently stated that “Swaraj is my birthright”. If that was the goal, Gandhi took upon himself to provide the means for it. 166 It was: “The spinning-wheel and Khadi are the means of obtaining it.” The death of Das was an opportunity to bring Chittamajan's followers into his camp. Tilak's followers however had not bought his logic and remained estranged till the end and also brought his nemesis with his assassination. Gandhi did not meet with much success even here too. What with Chhatranjan's one follower making a historical blot on Gandhi's sense of fair play. He was none other than Subash Chandra Bose, the leader in exile.

Since the acceptance of Spinning Franchise at Belgaum, the political air was laden with palpable tension. By mid-1925, the muted insinuations against spinning franchise turned into open demand for retire or revise call. 167 Congress members had

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165 Lokmanya's Death Anniversary, Navjivan, August 9 1925, CWMG vol.28: 51.
166 'There can be no swaraj without swadeshi. “Swaraj is my birthright” is the first part of the Tilak-Gita; the second part runs: “Swadeshi is the duty born with me.” ‘Fitness to pay Homage’, Navajivan, August 7 1921, CWMG vol. 20: 468.
167 Gandhi was prepared for revision of Spinning Franchise only in the condition of Swaraj Party and not individual members asking for it. As for retirement, Gandhi had himself contemplated this step earlier but had retracted. Oscillating between persistence and withdrawal, he argued that a public man to retire must first cease to be popular. It was a delicate matter. His was a voluntarily adopted service. His opponents must create an opinion against continuation of his idea, method, and personality. Are we ready?, YOUNG INDIA, June 18 1925, CWMG vol.27: 258.
begun to devise and adopt ingenious methods to ravage the Spinning Franchise. In many districts, as reported to Gandhi when he was on tour in south, the Congress committees were accepting money in lieu of yarn. In Gandhi's Gujarat too the Spinning Franchise had been reduced to mockery.\textsuperscript{168} Most of the yarn sent by members was spun indifferently. The spinners were more concerned with fulfillment of the obligation than the quality of their spinning. The insufficient twisting made the yarn weak and unsuitable for weaving. A large quantity of yarn went waste. It also affected the earnings of weavers.\textsuperscript{169} The rule that permitted the purchase of yarn for contribution led to an increase in hypocrisy and falsehood.\textsuperscript{170} Gandhi wanted to withdraw the provision that allowed members to send shelf yarn.

The fracas had important lesson for Gandhi. It proved Congress' predominant opposition to Khadi. The operational result of Spinning Franchise was dismal. With in the span of few months, from a position that desired securing Congress only for Khadi, Gandhi had to change his tune. Now he proposed Congress to be converted into a political body while advocating formation of All India Spinners' Association with in the aegis of Congress for Khadi. From a position of enforcing ideological cleansing he had taken a sharp turn to surrender Congress to Swarajist control. He also proposed alteration of franchise to accommodate those who had refused to spin or send even shelf yarn. His proposals brought parity between two ideological wings within Congress without according primacy to any one wing.\textsuperscript{171} In his attempts to

\textsuperscript{168} 'As long as I attach importance to spinning and visualize no improvement in India's economic condition without it, I shall stick to it as the qualification for the franchise. Mine is the beautiful condition of the mother who hugs her child more closely to her bosom the more the others dislike and slight it.' My Notes: Franchise reduced to Mockery, Navajivan, May 31 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 176)

\textsuperscript{169} My Notes: To Spinners, Navajivan, May 17 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 117) also Notes: Weavers' Complaint, YOUNG INDIA, May 14 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 94)

\textsuperscript{170} We have, very often, said in the \textit{Navajivan} that civil disobedience may be practiced not only towards those whom we regard as our enemies or those who regard us as enemies, but also towards those whom we regard as our friends or our elders. It is now time to apply this to the Congress. The rule which permits the purchase of yarn to be contributed must be annulled because, not only has spinning gained nothing by it but, on the contrary it has led to an increase in hypocrisy and falsehood. Civil Disobedience in the Congress, Navajivan, August 2 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 16)

\textsuperscript{171} 'Those who understand the meaning of civil disobedience will sing the praises of the spinning-wheel all the twenty-four hours; hence my suggestion is that the latter should be given the same standing that the Swarajists occupy today or, in other words, an association for the spinning-wheel should be founded under the auspices of the Congress, whose only task would be to spread the use of the spinning-wheel and Khadi.' What about Gujarat? Navajivan, August 2 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 10)
wrest control of Congress for village India, Gandhi failed miserably. The gradual shift that Congress Committees were witnessing from being debating bodies to spinning associations, Khadi shops and depots, was arrested abruptly and status-quo was brought back. 172

All-India Spinners’ Association was organized on the grand scale. Its ambition was not just to provide subsistence employment to poor. It also opened doors for educated unemployed. The recruits were not to actually spin and earn their living but build a network, an organizational web, of Khadi production and sales. To give a head-start to this enterprise Gandhi depended on the collection under All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. 173 Only those who believed in the efficacy of Spinning wheel were invited to join in. Das, Gandhi reiterated, had come to recognize the place of wheel in Indian situation. 174 By anointing himself as the Chairman of All-India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, Gandhi took total responsibility for the collection and administration of fund. Its avowed aim was to propagate spinning-wheel and Khadi. Deshbandhu was not particularly enamoured by spinning wheel as testified by his biographer. 175 Yet, Gandhi hinged second phase of massive organization building through All India Spinners’ Association on the memory and legacy Deshbandhu.

Strong opposition surfaced at Kanpur where Congress met for its annual ritual of baton-passing. Gandhi argued for the continuation of duel franchise of monetary payment of four annas or supply of 2000 yards of self spun yarn. Congress members asked for the total abolition of spinning franchise. There was strong opposition even to its introduction as an alternative franchise. ‘If I were convinced that Swaraj could

172 ‘To me I seem to be constantly growing. I must respond to varying conditions, and yet remain changeless within. I do not wish violently to wrest the Congress from educated India. The latter must grow to the new thought, if such it is.’ ‘Why not surrender completely?’, YOUNG INDIA, August 20 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 86-8)

173 ‘Notes: A political sufferer’, YOUNG INDIA, August 6 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 27)

174 ‘It could be said that except me, perhaps, no one but his wife knows his views on the spinning-wheel and Khadi towards the end of his life. My Notes: All India Deshbandhu Memorial’, Navajivan, August 2 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 12-3)

175 Writes a biographer of C.R. Das, ‘With the incarceration of Mr Gandhi, in March, 1922, the Charkha movement received a great set-back and these whilom [sic] symbol of Indian independence and prosperity were relegated to the scrap-heap…. Chitta Ranjan had never pinned his faith to the cult of the Charkha, and this led to the formation of the Swaraj Party in 1922, to carry on the non-co-operation campaign more effectively from within the council’. Ray, Prithwis Chandra, Life and Times of C.R. Das: The Story of Bengal’s Self Expression, 1927.
be won merely by enrolling one crore members’, Gandhi spoke in a tone reminiscent of his prior face-off with the Congressmen at Ahmedabad AICC meet in 1924, ‘I would have no conditions at all. Why don’t you have a resolution permitting everyone to become a member of the Congress?’ Then with heavy heart he went to prophesied, ‘Today you may oppose me, but the time is near when all of you will say that Gandhi was right.’

At Kanpur, his tenure as president of the Congress came to an end. Immediately after, Gandhi announced suspension of his travel programme for a year. In this year he remained confined to Ashram and scarcely ventured out. He read Gita more to find solace than to gain spirituality, wrote autobiography, and concentrated his energy on organizing AISA. All through his yearlong exile into Ashram in 1926 Gandhi maintained my-politics-confined-to-Khadi attitude. Spinning was done with ‘religious punctuality’. He managed his weekly journals of Navajivan in Gujarati and Hindi and Young India. Gandhi called these journals ‘views-paper’. In these journals he regularly published accounts of Khadi work from centers sprouting all over the country. He inspired an extensive documentation on Khadi. Gandhi himself was ambivalent about the benefits such statistical publications. The motive behind such publication was to give an idea of the Khadi work. The journals at

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176 'If you really wish to be rid of foreign cloth, dismiss mill cloth from your mind. I belong to a province which has a large number of textile mills, and I have happy relations with mill-owners. But I know that they have never stood by the country in the hour of its need. They plainly tell us that they are not patriots, that their sole aim is to make money. If the Government wants, it can force all cotton mills to close down, can stop the import of machinery, but it would never dare to throw our spinning-wheels and spindles into fire.' Speech on Franchise Resolution', AICC, December 24 1925, (CWMG vol.29, 352)

177 'If you object on principle to wearing Khadi, if it offends your conscience, you should certainly leave the Congress. But you cannot ignore a Congress resolution while remaining in the Congress.' 'Speech on Franchise Resolution', Subjects Committee Meeting, Kanpur’, December 24 1925, (CWMG vol.29, 353)

178 'The reasons for the decision are chiefly three:
1. To give my tired limbs as much rest as is possible to give them. Dr. Ansari has sent me elaborate instructions forbidding even all avoidable mental toil.
2. To enable me to give personal attention to the Ashram. I was expected to do this when it was opened, but I have not been able to do so except for the first year of its existence.
3. To enable me to put the affairs of the A.I.S.A., satisfactory as they are, on a sound businesslike basis. This requires constant supervision and attention to details. This is possible only if I am available at all times to the organizing secretary.' 'Indulgence or self denial', YOUNG INDIA, January 7 1926, (CWMG vol.29, 381)

179 There was also a counter-view about Gandhi’s journals. A correspondent wrote in his criticism: 'Navajivan has become like a monthly magazine because it contains uninteresting and depressing articles on the spinning-wheel and Khadi.' 'Concerning Navajivan', Navajivan, March 15 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 312.
periodic intervals published information regarding processes leading to Khadi manufacture. Adopting the dictum of detached action gave him personal contentment but it robbed vitality off the national movement. Increasingly, it was evident that the momentum of the national movement drew Gandhi than him willingly leading it.

The khaddar clause in the constitution was ultimately altered at Gauhati where Congress met in the end of 1926. There was palpable opposition among the Congress members for its continuance. Many in Congress opposed Khadi and viewed it 'as a mere mahatmic freak or fad'. Yet there was no dearth of veneration. Srinivasa Iyengar, the then Congress President, said 'Khaddar is at once the radiant symbol of our self-reliance and of our power of resistance'. The condition of ceremonial wear of Khadi had given rise to 'atmosphere of cant, hypocrisy, and humbug'. Gandhi asked for the clause to be altered into making 'habitual wear of khaddar' a qualification for franchise. Stiffening of the clause from 'ceremonial wear' to 'habitual wear' was his final recourse to keep Khadi in the Congress franchise. While granting the right of Congress to alter its constitution, Gandhi refused to budge from his position. 'My own opinion is emphatically that it will be wrong for the Congress, if it is to have an organic connection with the starving millions, to break this one and only bond between the classes and the masses.' That brought the stalemate.

In Congress constitution, spinning or wearing Khadi was no longer the qualification for membership. One had the right to membership even if the person

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180 The constructive programme has its due share given to it. The place of honour is assigned to khaddar. The President trusts that the All-India Spinners' Association will become a nation-wide labour organization which, if it cannot be identical with swaraj, will go some way towards it. It can become that if every Congressman and every Congresswoman will do his or her duty. 'The Congress', YOUNG INDIA, January 6 1927, (CWMG vol.32, 519)

181 'The khaddar clause in the constitution is, in my opinion, altered for the better. The ceremonial wear had become the laughing stock of all. Habitual wear of khaddar is the right thing if khaddar wear should find a place in our franchise qualifications. It is to be hoped that every Congress worker will enforce this resolution in his own person and induce others to do likewise.' 'The Congress', YOUNG INDIA, January 6 1927, (CWMG vol.32, 523)

182 'If their experience tells them that Khadi has no backing in the country, if they think that it has nothing to do with the masses, they should unhesitatingly repeal the offending clause.' 'Khadi Franchise', YOUNG INDIA, June 9 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 457-9)

183 'During my travels in the South, I discovered that Congress organizations accepted money in lieu of yarn for membership. I understood that the practice had become almost universal. As a member myself and as editor, I have no hesitation in saying that the practice is illegal. The Congress ledgers can only contain yarn receipts, not monetary subscriptions. To take money payments, therefore, is to violate the constitution. I understand that there are gentlemen who persist in

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did not don Khadi. But it was still a membership restricted by 'Khadi Clause'. According to the conditions, a member thus enrolled was debarred from participation in the work of the Congress, its committee or subcommittees, nor could the person speak, vote or contest the elections of any of its committees, if the person was not 'a constant wearer of Khadi'. Wearing of Khadi was must for a Congress volunteer. Therefore, as a result of the Khadi clause, one who was not a constant wearer could not enjoy any of the rights of the Congress and was debarred from rendering certain kinds of service; for instance, he could not become a volunteer. Gandhi was of the opinion that 'all privileges enjoyed by Congressmen should be and must be in the form of service to be rendered by them'.

A 'constant wearer of Khadi' literally meant one who habitually wore Khadi irrespective of consideration of space, occasion, and time. A person who wore foreign or mill cloth on all occasions excepting times while attending to Congress duties was not a 'constant wearer of Khadi'; nor was the person who wore Khadi as partial cloth of his full attire.

When Khaddar clause in the Congress constitution made it compulsory for the Congress voters to be habitual wearer of Khadi, convenient readings began to be imputed to the Khadi clause. Gandhi’s opinion was that Khadi was fast gripping the imagination of the masses. If therefore urban Congress workers flouted the clause, Gandhi advocated stringency in application than abrogation of clause requiring

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184 'According to the constitution of the Congress, one has a right to become its member even if one does not wear Khadi, and one cannot be prevented from becoming a member. But a member thus enrolled cannot take part in the working of the Congress, its committee or subcommittees, nor can he speak, vote or contest the elections of any of its committees, if he is not 'a constant wearer of Khadi'. As a result of the Khadi clause, one who is not a constant wearer cannot enjoy any of the rights of the Congress and is debarred from rendering certain kinds of service; for instance, he cannot become a volunteer.' 'What does "constant wearer" mean?', Navajivan, March 3 1929, CWMG vol.40, 69.

185 Committees were caught accepting cash in lieu of yarn when enrolling members of the Congress. 'It was suggested that those who might no spin or get the required yarn spun by others, could pay cash, but the suggestion was rejected on the ground that if a person wishing to become a member did not even take the trouble to obtain yarn from somebody else, the spinning qualification for the franchise would be rendered pointless.' 'My Notes: Cash in Lieu of Yarn', Navajivan, April 5 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 474. Neither there was adherence of compulsory donning of Khadi. 'To have the right of voting in the Congress, a member has to wear Khadi when doing Congress work and on similar occasions. In spite of this, it is found in places that members do not wear Khadi.' 'My Notes: Those who do not wear Khadi', Navajivan, April 5 1925, CWMG vol. 26: 474.
Congress workers to ‘habitually’ wear Khadi. However if majority voice was for abrogation Gandhi was willing to concede the demand.\(^{186}\)

The decision to send a statutory commission comprising of all white members brought politics to foreground. While nationally sentiments raged, Gandhi asked the country to boycott foreign cloth. It demanded a revolutionary change in the mental outlook and sartorial choices of the political India.\(^{187}\) Securing national unanimity on boycott was first step towards its enforcement. Gandhi’s position as he described to Motilal was to depend on the combined strength of mills and Khadi. Motilal was told, ‘Mills by themselves cannot achieve the boycott but mills if they play the game together with charkha can do so. The charkha by itself can achieve the boycott within a reasonable period, the pace being dependent upon intensity of the work put in by the politicians.’\(^{188}\) He offered to provide for an illimitable quantity of Khadi if cost and quality was not given consideration. Although in the same letter Gandhi admitted to Motilal that ‘The only thing that hampers the progress of Khadi is the want of demand and want of capital.’

Gandhi negotiated with mill-owners regarding the boycott but his efforts did not meet any tangible success.\(^{189}\) Gandhi desired permanent place for Khadi. He also

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\(^{186}\) ‘When asked, I merely gave my opinion that experience had shown that either the Khadi clause should go altogether, or it should be stiffened to mean habitual as distinguished from ceremonial wear.’ ‘Khaddar Franchise’, YOUNG INDIA, November 7 1929, CWMG vol.42, 110.

\(^{187}\) ‘If the mills work not for exploiting the masses as they now do, but for serving them, they will supplement the products of the cottage spinning-wheel and the handloom and not supersede them as they now do. Khadi will fail only when Khadi lovers falter in their faith if or their faith is based on a mere shadow, i.e., if there is no grinding poverty among the masses, if they have no leisure hours during the year, or if, though they have spare hours, the spinning-wheel is not the most suitable and practicable occupation conceivable for many millions. Boycott of foreign cloth would have but a temporary value if it could be obtained solely by the indigenous mills. And I hold it to be impossible in the near future to enforce the boycott through the single agency of mills. In my opinion, it is Khadi alone that has made such boycott a practical proposition.’ ‘Place of Khadi’, YOUNG INDIA, April 12 1928, CWMG vol.36, 218.

\(^{188}\) ‘Mills by themselves cannot achieve the boycott within the time that will satisfy the politician but mills if they play the game together with charkha can do so within a time that will satisfy the most sanguine expectations of any patriot. The charkha by itself can achieve the boycott within a reasonable period, the pace being dependent upon intensity of the work put in by the politicians. And as a Khadi manufacturer, I am open to negotiate with anyone for supplying almost an illimitable quantity provided he does not bind me to the quality beyond a certain limit and does not mind the cost.’ ‘Letter to Motilal Nehru’, April 12 1928, CWMG vol.36, 220.

\(^{189}\) What can our mills do?, YOUNG INDIA, March 15 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 105); Foreign Cloth Boycotts: Some questions, YOUNG INDIA, March 22 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 134-6); The National Week, YOUNG INDIA, March 29 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 153-5). ‘Mills had tendency to compete with Khadi itself. They began to manufacture cloth similar to Khaddar with the result
wanted to dictate the kind of manufacture the mills could do. He wanted to prohibit them from producing anything similar to Khadi.\(^{190}\) The negotiation therefore was fruitless.\(^{191}\) The mill-owners formed their own Swadeshi League instead on tugging along with Congress.\(^{192}\) The mill owners were more amenable to pressures but more of government rather than that of Congress. Gandhi did talk of resorting to Satyagraha but never initiated it because of its seeming impossibility. Fostering of a negative attitude towards indigenous mill manufactures was thought to suffice. A positive boycott, Gandhi wrote to Motilal, who was eager to bring mill-owners on board, would only stir the owners into greater recalcitrance.\(^{193}\) The picketing of foreign cloth shops was allowed though.\(^{194}\) Congress therefore once again began the campaign for changing the mental outlook of the middle-class and inducing them and rural-folk into wearing Khadi. The programme therefore was to leave mills 'severely' alone and campaign for boycott and Khadi.\(^{195}\)

Congress constituted a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee for the purpose. A full-time Secretary\(^{196}\) was appointed to undertake the work with Gandhi as Chairman.\(^{197}\) It proposed a scheme for boycott of foreign cloth through Khadi.\(^{198}\) While burning was revived as a form of people’s aversion to foreign cloth, boycott was effected by wearing AISA-branded Khadi alone. Bonfire of foreign clothes was that it became difficult to distinguish between hand-spun Khaddar and mill-khaddar. Nationalists wanted mills to manufacture fine cloth to compete with foreign cloth and not to make undue profit.' (Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol4, p135.)

\(^{190}\) Letter to Vittaldas Jerajani, April 14 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 229)

\(^{191}\) Jawaharlal spoke in April 1928 at Lahore that, 'The aid of Khadi was absolutely necessary...One third of the cloth consumed in India is imported from abroad. Eighty per cent of this is received from Britain and the remaining twenty percent from Japan and other countries.' 'On the Boycott of foreign-cloth', Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol.3, 1972, pp163-4.

\(^{192}\) Nehru was decidedly against Swadeshi league movement. In 1933, he was reported as having said: ‘I have no time to waste over Swadeshi league exhibitions...I do not subscribe to the policy of encouraging exhibitions where mill-cloth is allowed either for sale or for display. I have no sympathy for mill-owners. They try to fill their pockets at the expense of labourers’. ‘Speech to the Kanpur Swadeshi League, December 6 1933, Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol. 6, p78.

\(^{193}\) Letter to Motilal Nehru, April 20 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 243)

\(^{194}\) Place of Khadi, YOUNG INDIA, April 12 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 217)

\(^{195}\) Letter to Motilal Nehru, April 20 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 243)

\(^{196}\) Jairamdas Doulatram was a leading Congressman from Sind.

\(^{197}\) Boycott, Navajivan, March 3 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 67)

\(^{198}\) Speech on resolution on Nehru Report, December 28 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 288)
stopped as people had resorted to burning others' cloth while themselves clad in foreign fineries. A worried Gandhi had to recall the weapon. When warning bells were relayed to him he did not believe that a call made out of pure motive could manifest in violence.\textsuperscript{199} Picketing was for women workers. They picketed the shops of foreign cloth and liquor. Boycott was a permanent programme, to be pursued without rest or rancor.\textsuperscript{200}

At Lahore in December 1929 Gandhi circulated two important resolutions that were meant to bring Congress closer to grassroots concern. The Congress Exhibition, Gandhi proposed through a resolution, being 'predominantly and progressively of an educative character', was to be conducted mainly to further the programme of the boycott of foreign cloth through Khaddar. Its conduct was made the responsibility of the AISA and thus he closed a recurring controversy about the content of the exhibition. Khadi and spinning wheel was to be the center round which all the other exhibits would find place. Gandhi's other resolution was to take-away Congress from its December fixation. The winter session of Congress involved considerable expenses for poor delegates. At a time when Congress goal was passionately announced to be that of Complete Independence, the shifting of annual session from colonial winter to sub-continental spring was an effort to proximate Congress to people and to wean the organization away from any colonial excrescences.\textsuperscript{201}

This perhaps was the last of Gandhi's attempt to change the content and candour of annual Congress session. Gandhi wrote a lengthy note explaining the need to lessen the expenditure involved in the conduct of session. Instead of a township of tents, session should adopt open grass sheds with half walls. Gandhi also advised constitution of a small expert committee to consider the best and the cheapest method of building a temporary city.

At Lahore, Gandhi also proposed permanent and complete autonomy for his programme of constructive works. He proposed a resolution requesting autonomous

\textsuperscript{199} Patriots' Wail, YOUNG INDIA, February 4 1926, (CWMG vol.29, 365)  
\textsuperscript{200} Speech at Public Meeting, Delhi, March 7 1931, (CWMG vol45: 274)  
\textsuperscript{201} Draft Resolutions for AICC, Lahore, December 26 1929, (CWMG vol42, 321); Speech at Subjects Committee, AICC-I, January 1 1930, (CWMG vol.42, 357) also, What Not to do?, YOUNG INDIA, (CWMG vol.42, 400-2)
status to bodies advocating boycott of foreign cloth, prohibition and untouchability practice. Such autonomy practically meant a tenuous affiliation with parent political organization but with powers to enroll members, raise funds, frame constitutions, and independent functioning with unattached office-bearers. In 1925, he had extracted from Congress such an autonomous status for All India Spinners’ Association. The Congress members who were asked to vote for the resolution thought of Gandhi’s effort as towards creation of ‘an empire within the empire’. Gandhi did not shy away from admitting such an intention. He wanted ‘dominion status’ for his babies. Practically, the autonomous bid by Gandhi for his pet programmes betrayed his distrust of Congress members as well as the stultified organizational structure that did not admit innovative political strategies. While disowning the constituents of Congress Gandhi carried its name which gave a national platform to his concerns. The birth of AISA was out of aborted placenta within which Gandhi hoped to nurture Congress into a constructive vehicle for his Khadi programme. The success of AISA convinced Gandhi to ask for autonomous bodies for all his concerns. The practice would continue throughout his life. Each of the body shall display its umbilical chord with Congress but would refuse its guidance and supervision. Within a short span of three years AISA had spread to some 1500 villages and had been working among a more than a lakh of spinners and had some two thousand young men and women on its roll. Its work in the villages was adding to Congress prestige though many claimed that AISA workers were solely concerned with Khadi organization and had no clue of the political upheavals. Gandhi disagreed with such denunciations and used Khadi workers to kick-start civil-disobedience movement in 1930. Most of these organizations had Gandhi in certain positions of non-executive authority and executive position were entrusted to his ideologically loyal comrades. To the reluctant politicians Gandhi argued that ‘The Congress is a political body in which there are bound to be frequent differences of opinion.’ It also had encroaching tendencies of financial corruption and moral degeneration. On his travel Gandhi was asked uncomfortable questions about the Congress fund collected in the name of Tilak or others. The lay-donors would readily give money to Gandhi but not to Congress. ‘We will give you money in your name. We shall give to you but not to the Congress’, he was told. He was the main fund-raiser for Congress. Yet he had no control over its expenditure. Now Gandhi wanted to reverse the position. ‘These committees want from you no money, no men but only permission to work in your name’, he urged the
Congressmen. He warned that the Congress was unable to raise money or recruit members and yet it wanted control over bodies pursuing constructive work. Congress had ‘no right’ to such a course. Committees were proposed on the principle of specialization of work. ‘If the Congress wants to keep everything in its hand then there would be no doing of work and no progress. Khaddar might have political effects. But one willing to contribute need not concern with its political aspect but its humanitarian character.\textsuperscript{202}

After 1929 Lahore Congress resolution declaring India’s intent of complete independence, Gandhi firmly resumed active leadership of the movement after a gap of nearly eight years. With the Dandi March in March 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement was launched. Civil Disobedience Movement was launched with a plank that was common to all Indians and sought to position itself above the thorny communal issue. Civil disobedience movement was launched purportedly to break the government’s ‘illegitimate monopoly of salt’. Salt law was chosen as ‘the independence movement’ was ‘essentially for the poorest in the land’. Gandhi’s letter to the Viceroy on the eve of the launch of Dandi march was a long itinerary of economic grievances under which India was made to suffer.\textsuperscript{203} What distinguished the civil disobedience campaign from the non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 was the stress Gandhi laid during the former campaign on the economic grievances of the masses and the meaning of political freedom for them. ‘I have,’ he claimed, ‘endeavoured to give a new orientation to the national demand,’ which consisted in ‘familiarizing the nation with the contents of independence’. Whereas the non-cooperation movement was launched to secure redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, this time Gandhi emphasized the economic, political, cultural and spiritual ruin of the country under British rule and pleaded for immediate relief to the masses from what he described as ‘the killing weight’ of an expensive, top-heavy administration. Unless, he argued, ‘the motive that lies behind the craving for independence’ was constantly kept in view, ‘there is every danger of independence coming to us so changed as to be of no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking’. This seemed all the more

\textsuperscript{202} Speech at Subjects Committee, AICC-II, December 30 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 336-9)
\textsuperscript{203} Letter to Lord Irwin, March 2 1930, (CWMG vol.43, 2-8)
necessary because, as Gandhi was aware, 'those who are engaged in the war of independence are not, it is obvious, moved by the economic wrong. They do not feel it. They are moved solely by the moral and spiritual wrong which they feel in every fibre of their being...In their impatience to break through the snaky coil they do not mind what they do so long as they do something, even though it may destroy them'.

Gandhi was distancing himself from the political formation of Congress. The character of Civil Disobedience Campaign was one such indication. Other was the fact that he launched the movement not with Congress workers but with seventy-one of his closest Ashram volunteers. In the prayer meeting, on the very morning of the launch of long-walk to Dandi, Gandhi told the volunteers: 'We hope to become the representatives of the poorest of the poor, the lowest of the low and the weakest of the weak.' He had miserably failed in achieving such a goal for Congress workers. Civil Disobedience Movement was seen as 'last throw of a gambler'. It was more so in his struggle within Congress than in the war for Independence. It would be his last attempt to convert Congress as a vehicle for his constructive work.

It was Gandhi's backyard that the march to Dandi meandered through. The residents of each village that the marchers halted at were asked to provide basic information on their village. There were very few who wore Khadi or plied Charkha. Most of the village showed nil in the columns requiring data on habitual Khadi wearers. For Gandhi it was disheartening. 'How shameful that your village shows a zero against the columns for the number of spinning wheels and Khadi-wearers!' In every village on the route to Dandi Gandhi enquired in detail about the progress of Khadi and exhorted people to start spinning so as to accelerate the manufacture of Khadi to meet the increased demand. Writing to Jerajani, a Khadi worker of Bombay, he suggested that it should be made known that Khadi would be sold not for money, but only against hand-spun yarn. This was, he said, 'the only way to make it clear to

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204 Preface, (CWMG vol.43, vii)

205 As early as 1908, Gandhi was giving words to his own feelings when he wrote while writing the 'story of a soldier of truth', 'I think I hear a divine voice whispering into my ear, telling me not to take part in politics. He who would approach every question from the standpoint of justice had better stay out of the bother and bustle of politics'. Indian Opinion, May 2 1908, CWMG vol. 8: 218.

206 Some Questions, YOUNG INDIA, February 20 1930, (CWMG vol.42, 483)

207 Speech at Vasana, March 16 1930, (CWMG vol.43, 76)
people that Khadi is not a mere commodity...but ...a symbol of the nation’s strength and aspiration’.

If Khadi was to be so closely linked with the political course that country adopt at a particular time, its production must surge with the rising political temperature. The experience during the civil-disobedience was such that as the politics brought greater number of people to its rebellious ambit, first thing that they did was to don Khadi. During the non-cooperation movement, Khadi had a nascent beginning. Its production was quantitatively as well as spatially restricted. When civil-disobedience was launched in 1930, the production though nothing close to national consumption potential had reached a respectable level from the standard of being a voluntary effort. But soon after the movement was launched, its stock dwindled nationally. As to show that Khadi’s career was interwoven with political crests and troughs, immediately after Gandhi took to march to Dandi Khadi’s consumption reached crescendo and brought acute scarcity in its availability. This limitation in production and fallout of its inevitable political association were among some reasons that brought change in programmatic reorientation in 1934.

Its constant advocacy through a mix of political and economic reasons had transformed Khadi into a ‘uniform of rebellion’. During each of the rebellious crests as people vied to don the ‘uniform’ its supply dived well below the demand. But a surge in demand was almost fulfilled by the supply of ‘spurious Khadi’ from Indian mills. The strategy of the proponents was to fuel not just the demand but also to supply through people’s adoption of spinning. The intervention of Indian mills to fill the gap had the tendency to jeopardize the potential of Khadi to become a commodity produced by masses. As the struggle surged to rebellious crescendo,

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208 Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Jairamdas Doulatram, Secretary, Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee in March 1929: The demand for Khadi is increasing so rapidly that we are hard put to meet it. Our bhandars have got little stocks left and our production centers cannot supply the demand. This is having a very bad effect. Every considerable town writes to me asking for a bhandar. What am I to do?’ Nehru asked central AISA to give UP-AISA a loan to enhance manufacturing.

209 Notes: Scarcity of Khaddar, YOUNG INDIA, March 27 1930, (CWMG vol.43, 137)

210 Bernard S Cohen, Colonialism and its forms of knowledge; p107

211 The success of the boycott of foreign cloth has naturally resulted in greatly increased sales of Khadi. So great was the demand for Khadi at one period that it could not met and appeals were made to the public to reduce their consumption of cloth. ...I should like to warn people against purchasing spurious cloth which is specially made coarse so as to resemble Khadi. In order to
Khadi’s stocks depleted rapidly. If donning Khadi was an expression of patriotism, then, Indians, conscious of the cause of struggle, were out to buy it. But its reach remained limited. Gandhi advised curtailment of clothing consumption so that maximum people could not only adopt Khadi but also have an opportunity to display their patriotic sentiments. He also issued notice for the public not to purchase Khadi more than their just need. Gandhi advised his Gujarati readers of Navajivan to adopt dhoti in the style of Malabar as that required less of cloth.

If Purna Swaraj was seemingly the call behind the declaration of Civil Disobedience, repeal of Salt Law was its public face. The masterful strategy adopted around the issue of salt drew envious admiration from no less a man than India’s Viceroy, Lord Irwin. And then something happened which was more tangible than anything the movement had yielded. For the first time since its establishment, the institution of Company-Bahadur met halfway a representative of the country, one who had defied its authority, on a footing of equality and with respectful courtesy.\(^{212}\) It was this sight that was more electrifying than the aftermath of truce-negotiations. The harvest of the movement, otherwise, was so depressing that the very man, an Englishman, who in March 1930 had played the role of Gandhi’s emissary to the Viceroy and thereby symbolized many things that Gandhi stood for, was driven to blunt criticism\(^{213}\). Jawahar became ‘almost uninterested’ in all that negotiations entailed. Gandhi had to implore Jawahar to be his earlier self. ‘I want your active support in what I am doing. And that I cannot get unless you criticize, alter, amend, reject and do many other things.’\(^{214}\)

Even while negotiating with Irwin, Gandhi remained uncompromising on the issue of boycott of foreign cloth. This item in the programme had affected the English material interests and was having significant effect on its cottage industry. It, avoid this the best course is to purchase from recognized dealers certified by the AISA. ... certain mills have manufactured this spurious Khadi. I would appeal to mill-owners to refrain from naming, stamping or styling cloth manufactured in their mills as ‘Khadi’ and also refrain, except for drills, satins, tussores, twills, jacquards and the like, from manufacturing cloth under 18 counts’ yarn. To merchants I would appeal not to sell any cloth as Khadi cloth unless it bears the stamp of the AISA or an organization certified by the AISA. ‘On Khadi’, October 19 1930, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol. 4, p407.

\(^{212}\) Preface, (CWMG vol.45: vi)
\(^{213}\) An Englishman’s Dilemma, YOUNG INDIA, April 16 1931, (CWMG vol.46, 3-8)
\(^{214}\) ‘A Note’, March 2 1931, (CWMG vol.45, 242)
therefore, easily lent itself to a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Congress policy. As a result of the Settlement, the Congress lifted the boycott of British goods, which had been adopted as a purely political weapon, but the boycott of foreign cloth, including British cloth, remained as 'an economic necessity for the semi-starved millions'. Writing in Young India on the 'needlessly bitter and unwarranted agitation' launched against the movement in England, Gandhi asked the Lancashire mill-owners to 'realize that India to be free from chronic starvation must for ever banish foreign cloth whether English, Japanese or any other...Let all the foreigners understand that this boycott movement is a mass movement, it is a humanitarian movement...It has political consequences, but being a purely economic and humanitarian movement it should command the support of the whole world'. Gandhi admitted that the Lancashire workmen might have to suffer during the transition stage. 'But can it be any reason', he asked, 'for India's millions starving themselves'. 'Lancashire did wrong in killing India's cottage industry', he said, and it must now 'turn to a less injurious industry'. In order to assuage the aggrieved feelings Gandhi readily accepted an invitation to visit Lancashire working community during his visit to London.

While imprisoned at Yervada, Gandhi made it a practice to write a weekly discourse called Tuesday Morning to be read at the prayer meeting of Ashram. He sent his discourses on various topics such as Truth, Ahimsa, Brahmacharya, Non-stealing, Equality of religion, etc. But he was reluctant to send one on Swadeshi. His reason was that it was a political arena that he would not touch till he was imprisoned. 'I feel inclined to omit the subject of swadeshi', he wrote to the Ashram colleague. 'I feel that by writing on it I may violate to some extent my resolution to make no reference to political subjects. Even if I write about swadeshi from a spiritual standpoint, I am bound to include in the discourse something which would have an indirect connection with politics.'

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215 Interview to the Press, May 6 1931, (CWMG vol.46, 102)
216 Foreign cloth and other British gods, YOUNG INDIA, April 23 1931, (CWMG vol.46, 26)
217 Letter to Emma Harker, June 5 1931, (CWMG vol.46, 324)
218 Letter to Narandas Gandhi, September 25/30 1930, (CWMG vol.44, 186)
While in Jail, Gandhi religiously spun two hours on takli standing. Gandhi would keep posted his Ashram colleagues on the development of spinning activities at his side in jail. His letters to his inmates are full of his experimentation at the wheel or at Takli. After spinning futilely on iron takli Gandhi gave it up in favor of bamboo one. To Narandas he reported: 'These days I have been spinning on the takli at least 100 rounds a day. I have given up the iron takli, after having tried very hard to spin well on it, and now I am back to the bamboo takli. I feel a little better with it. The speed has risen to 75 per hour. It will go up still. After I have mastered the bamboo takli fully, I will return to the iron one.'

At Karachi the Fundamental Rights Resolution was passed by the Congress. Out of twenty clauses, some fifteen, Gandhi discovered to his pleasant surprise, could be implemented by the people themselves without State assistance. If, he argued, ‘we do not do the things we ought to today, when the power comes to us we shall be found unready for them.’ ‘A popular State can never act in advance of public opinion’, he explained further. ‘If it goes against it, it will be destroyed. Democracy disciplined and enlightened is the finest thing in the world. A democracy prejudiced, ignorant, superstitious will land itself in chaos and may be self-destroyed’. He therefore, wanted the Congress and the people to concentrate their energies on constructive and self-purificatory tasks, and opposed the methods of terrorists on the ground that ‘the capacity to run the Government of the country on behalf of the people and for the people...will not come simply if the British leave or are killed.’ The issue of non-violence fundamentally differentiated the majority of Congressmen who viewed it simply as one of convenient policy and Gandhi, who regarded it as an ‘article of faith’.

Our brother is starving; we know that he can earn a living by plying the spinning-wheel but he does not do so out of laziness and that he will if we give him an object-lesson by spinning ourselves; in that case, we shall certainly take to the spinning-wheel. In India today, hundreds of thousands are in this predicament.' Yet

219 Letter to Mirabehan, December 20 1930, (CWMG vol.45, 11)
220 'A Letter', December 31 1930, (CWMG vol.45, 43)
221 What we can do today, YOUNG INDIA, July 30 1931, (CWMG vol.47, 235)
222 Madness, Navajivan, July 26 1931, (CWMG vol.47, 208)
educated Indians did not take to spinning as they lacked fellow feelings towards their poor brethren. The government would have tottered down if Indians had shown their resolve by substituting import of foreign clothes with Khadi. As a result cry for Swaraj remained a meek voice. It was futile to expect Swaraj till that voice is made so strong as to make the demand irresistible. \(^{223}\) It is here that Nehru differed. In his somewhat exasperated tone he questioned Gandhi’s attempt to consign every other agenda secondary to Khadi.

Gandhi was jealous of Congress identity that had been carved out of the sacrificial fire of non-co-operation. At no cost he would agree to its sublimation in government patronage. He was against any complicity with the government or its machinery so to maintain the independent and autonomous image of the Congress. One issue emerged to present conflicting mores of Gandhi and Congress. It was about the exhibits that were to be displayed at the annual Congress Conventions. Since the Ahmedabad Congress where Khadi was at the center of Swadeshi exhibits, it was a set tradition to exclude not only foreign cloth but all foreign things. Exhibitions slowly achieved distinctive status at the annual conclave of Congress. In these exhibitions Khadi occupied pride of place. On the part of organizers there was often temptation to invite governmental and private sector participation in these exhibitions. When waves of patriotism were leapfrogging these temptations were still under control. But just as it subsided in the wake of suspension of non cooperation movement, the organizers too began to clamour for government participation. In 1927 Madras Congress this tradition was breached and foreign textile specimens and machinery were proudly displayed. Not even British exhibits were excluded. The organizers not only invited government and private patronage but remorselessly relegated Khadi to another obscure enclosure, outside the main All India court. Rumours circulated that the Madras government had desired so.

Further, in Khadi pavilion, the exhibits went against its proclaimed mores. AISA had been emphasizing the need to use hand-spun yarn both as weft and warp. But the practice of weaving mixed Khadi was catching on. Half or mixed Khadi was that stuff whose warp was made of mill-yarn. Though manufacture of such mixed Khadi was against the precept of Congress resolution, many Congress organizations

\(^{223}\) Citizens Honour is country’s honour, Navajivan, November 23 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 343)
supported it. It was the use of yarn as warp that tested its quality. If the practice caught on it hampered the improvement in the quality of yarn. But the exhibition banner boldly proclaimed its intention in ingeniously written couplet:

‘Feed the poor and work the able,  
Let the Charkha spin the weft,  
And the mill the warp,  
In this combination lies the solution.’

In the same vain was another poster which was mischievously advocating:

‘To force a weaver to use hand-spun warp yarn  
Is like forcing him to fight a battleship with a knife  
To cut a weaver off from the best methods of work  
Is like cutting off his thumbs.’

Gandhi was cut to bone and charged the exhibition with ‘anti-India-spirit’. Gandhi said the posters betrayed ‘venomous prejudice’ against Khadi. It jarred with Gandhi’s view that even the partial use of mill yarn would mean eventual burial of both Khadi enterprise and handloom sector. The latter poster accused Gandhi of doing to weavers what he was accusing the East India Company of having done in their trade greed: to cut the thumbs of the helpless weavers. Gandhi took to heart these open defiance and wrote aggressively.

In 1928, at Calcutta Congress too model of exhibition remained same with the sole exception that British exhibits were not to be displayed. Otherwise the exhibition was to comprise of machinery and textiles of foreign mark. As mark of their protest, AISA categorically refused to participate in the exhibition. AISA by threatening non-participation attempted to obviate recurrence of such a possibility. The departure from a tradition painstakingly set had hurt Gandhi. His position was that mill-cloth or foreign merchandise did not deserve Congress platform. Gandhi was eager to maintain Khadi’s unique identity and therefore was reluctant to merge it with melee of other exhibits. Congress exhibitions must primarily cater to Swadeshi and that too the basic enterprise of Khadi. While Gandhi was quite vocal about his criticism of

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224 The Drawbacks, YOUNG INDIA, May 28 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 160)
226 Letter to J M Sengupta, May 24 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 334); My Notes: Interview with Rabindranath Tagore, May 30 1925, (CWMG vol.37, 173)
exhibition at Madras, for Calcutta Congress he kept his criticism to private letters. In their indiscriminate invitation to government, Gandhi said, the organizers were betraying a ‘clear clash of ideals’ between them and him. Gandhi gave vent to his frustration when he wrote to Motilal, ‘They are evidently inviting local Governments’ co-operation. Evidently now all distinction has vanished and the Exhibition will be a more spectacular display than an instructive effort designed to educate the poor cultivator and the other public. There is a gratuitous mention there of Khadi. But there is no room in this Exhibition for me or Khadi in the real sense. Evidently it will not exclude either foreign cloth or foreign anything. I cannot say I am not grieved over this.’ Gandhi was even reluctant to attend the Congress meet. In a letter to Motilal, who had been inducing him to attend, Gandhi wrote, ‘What shall I do there?’ Immersed in Khadi work, his interest in the political work was getting increasingly suspect. In the same letter he gave vent to his real inclination and showed how distanced he had become from politics as generally understood, ‘I know that that part of the national work is also useful, but my heart has gone out of it and I become more and more inclined to give my time to what is consciously understood as constructive work’.

Exhibitions at Congress conventions had initially begun with educative purpose. A small entrance fee was put to regulate genuine from idle site-seers. But slowly exhibition became a source of considerable revenue for the Congress management. Not only visitors were charged entrance-fee but exhibition fee too was collected from those who put their exhibits. It was this eagerness to earn revenue that

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227 Letter to Dr B C Roy, November 28 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 106)
228 Letter to Motilal Nehru, September 30 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 318)
229 Jawaharlal Nehru attempted to mediate between Calcutta organizers and AISA. He wrote a letter to Shankerlal Banker offering an alternative out of impasse: ‘Could it not be possible for you to have an entirely separate Khadi exhibition? The Reception Committee might be induced to give you some land and some money and leave you a free hand. I should have thought that this was the best way out. The Bengal people will certainly not convert you to their way of thinking and I doubt that you will convert them for the present at least’. Letter to Shankerlal Banker, July 13 1928, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol.3, 1972, pp269-70.
230 Telegram from Dr B C Roy, (CWMG vol.38, 93) (CWMG vol.ft2: Roy’s reply)
made the Congress organizers fall prey to greater temptation of government and other private parties.\textsuperscript{231} Exhibitions were vehicle for true education and therefore he discouraged attempts to introduce commercial spirit in the exhibition. But organizers were not persuaded by this argument.\textsuperscript{232} At Lahore Congress, the Exhibition Committee desired to charge even AISA for Khaddar stalls.\textsuperscript{233} AISA refused to pay the required subscription.

AISA even contemplated organizing independent Khadi exhibition during the annual Congress conclave. That clearly divided the house further. Congress opposed such a move. AISA however came to experiment with the idea of organizing an independent all-India exhibition every year. Such an exhibition gave striking demonstration of entity and identity of Khadi enterprise. The idea of holding independent exhibition was also demonstrative of strength that AISA had succeeded in accruing. It no longer needed to flaunt its political parentage. It was ready to forsake the obvious advantage that its connection with Congress provided. Its acceptance among the population had reached a depth that gave it an independent identity.\textsuperscript{234}

It was at Madras Congress that the differences between Gandhi and young Nehru came to fore. The mighty Congress, Gandhi averred, was reduced to 'school boy's debating society' that drew resolutions that were 'hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed'.\textsuperscript{235} The resolution that he was critical about was one on Complete Independence passed at the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru who had just returned from a European tour imbibing much of socialist ideas. Nehru was peeved. Gandhi asked Nehru to behave and reign in his 'hooligans' and questioned the 'propriety' of resolutions passed. An infuriated Nehru wrote in a response that almost brought their relationship to end.

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\textsuperscript{231} Letter to Dr B C Roy, November 3 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 8)  \\
\textsuperscript{232} Letter to Dr. Gopichand, November 3 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 93)  \\
\textsuperscript{233} Letter to Satis Chandra Das Gupta, October 19 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 19)  \\
\textsuperscript{234} Letter to Secretary, All India Spinners' Association, January 20 1929, (CWMG vol.38, 375)  \\
\textsuperscript{235} The National Congress: Unity, YOUNG INDIA, January 5 1928, (CWMG vol.35, 435-41)  
\end{flushright}
The letter dated January 11, 1928 that the young Nehru wrote to ‘My Dear Bapuji’ was devastating in its indictment of the personality and ideals of Gandhi.²³⁶ It’s content betrayed long dormant and stifled feelings of the writer. Gandhi’s Hindswaraj, Nehru wrote, was a superfluous ‘little book’ that had failed to elicit Nehru’s intellectual agreement. Gandhi in criticizing west and its industrial civilization was akin to Katherine Mayo who had drawn a malicious ‘drain-inspector’s report’ based on unsavoury statistics on Indian life.²³⁷ Nehru talked of utopias and social theories that would eventually rid industrialism of its capitalist defects. And if India has a future then it is in industrialism alone. Gandhi was avoiding the real cause of Indian poverty by his prescription of Khadi regime. Why was he not taking cudgels up against ‘semi-feudal zamindari system’ or ‘capitalist exploitation’ that really kept the people poor? Khadi could never open the door of Indian independence as even Congress had spurned it as its franchise. Why cling to Khadi when it did not even succeed in boycott of foreign cloths? And, the Khadi workers on whom Gandhi showered so much attention, energy and hopes, were a bunch of apolitical workers. Least could be expected from them. Nehru was impatient for some political plan and expected Gandhi to provide the lead. But rarely was it forthcoming. ‘I have asked you many times what you expected to do in the future and your answers have been far from satisfying. All you have said has been that within a year or eighteen months you expected the Khadi movement to spread rapidly and in a geometric ratio and then some direct action in the political field might be indulged in. Several years and eighteen months have passed since then and the miracle has not happened.’ It shall neither happen in future. If India was to wait for freedom till the time Khadi became universal in India it shall be a long, darkened wait, ‘till the Greek Kalends’. Khadi might grow in due course but there was no sign that freedom was ‘coming in its train’. He disapproved of Gandhi’s attitude towards the boycott of British goods. ‘You must have read about the wonderful effectiveness of the boycott in China’, he wrote. Nehru then touched the most sensitive chord of Gandhi. ‘Has our

²³⁶ Letter from Jawaharlal Nehru, January 11 1928, (CWMG vol.35, 540-4)

²³⁷ In his rejoinder to the book Gandhi wrote: ‘The book is cleverly and powerfully written. The carefully chosen quotations give it the appearance of a truthful book. But the impression it leaves on my mind is, that it is the report of a drain inspector sent out with the one purpose of opening and examining the drains of the country to be reported upon, or to give a graphic description of the stench exuded by the opened drains.’(‘Drain Inspector’s Report’, YOUNG INDIA, CWMG vol. 34: p539)
boycott of foreign cloth by khaddar succeeded so remarkably? Has our spinning franchise succeeded? They have not but you do not hesitate to press them on the country and the Congress...'

Nehru in 1927 was a busy man. The Congress at Madras, in December 1927, was the culmination of a busy year-long schedule. In his ideological development a visit in this year to Europe proved to be of decisive importance. In February he attended the International Congress on Colonial Oppression And Imperialism, held at Brussels, and came into contact with communists and anti-colonial fighters from all over the world. Quoting S. Gopal who has emphasized that 'the turning point in Jawaharlal's mental development' came with active participation in the Brussels Congress, Sarkar238 writes that it gave him a vision which he often did not live up to but never totally abandoned. The same year, he visited the Soviet Union and was deeply impressed by the new socialist society. On his return, he published a book on the Soviet Union, on whose title page, he wrote, Wordsworth's famous lines on French Revolution: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive. But to be very young was very heaven'. Jawaharlal returned to India, in the words of his biographer S. Gopal, 'a self-conscious revolutionary radical'.239 With all his revolutionary enthusiasm the young Nehru returned to India. And when Gandhi's criticism of Madras Congress came,240 Nehru went through 'mental agitation' which made him write to Gandhi the letter quoted above.

In response, Gandhi wrote that Nehru's letter made him aware of the 'terrible extent' of the differences between them.241 The differences were so 'vast and radical' that Gandhi was now prepared to free him 'from the humble, unquestioning allegiance' that he gave him all these years. He asked Nehru to unfurl his banner.242 'If careful observation of the country in the light of your European experiences convinces you of the error of the current ways and means, by all means enforce your

238 Ibid., pp.252-3
240 'The National Congress', YOUNG INDIA, January 5 1928, (CWMG vol.35, 438)
241 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', January 17 1928, (CWMG vol.35, 469-70)
242 Ibid.
own views, but do please form a disciplined party’. If Nehru was disillusioned with Khadi workers, Gandhi’s Khadi cadre was no less disillusioned with Congress. Dr PC Ghosh of Khadi producing Abhoy Ashram was blunt enough to write to Gandhi that ‘Humbugism is writ large on the Congress’. He considered Congress as ‘a place for bluffers’. While asking for ‘tenderest feeling’ towards the oldest political institution of the country, Gandhi agreed with much of the criticism. Gandhi exhorted the Khadi workers to counteract ‘the talkative activities and falsities by silent, dignified, un-revengeful work and that alone’. There was, as Gandhi noted in a letter to Jawaharlal, ‘utter absence of seriousness and disinclination to do any concrete work demanding sustained energy’ on the part of the congressmen.

The importance of Gandhi-Nehru controversy lay in Gandhi’s troubled relationship with educated India. This India was impatient with Gandhi and saw his constructive programmes including Khadi as painful distraction from the main task of attaining the political liberation. ‘The fateful 1st of January 1930 is approaching fast, but you are still harping on your incantatory[sic] formula of ‘Khadi, Khadi, again Khadi’, and refuse to give any effective lead to the country’, wrote in a

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244 In response to Gandhi’s ‘unfurl your banner’ gauntlet, Nehru replied he had ‘no particular banner to unfurl’. Nehru wrote almost pleading with Gandhi for truce: ‘And even if there were possibilities of conflict on some points, there appeared to me absolutely no necessity for this difference or conflict to spread to the many other points on which I presumed there would be considerable ground for common action. ...No one has moved me and inspired me more than you...But even in the wider sphere am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child?’ ‘Letter to Mahatma Gandhi, January 23 1928’, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol. 3, 1972, pp18-20.

245 Letter to P C Ghosh, February 22 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 42)

246 Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, April 17 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 237)

247 Nehru’ selected work contains a letter that he wrote to a woman who was seeking some financial support from AICC to start an Ashram for social service. He wrote, declining support, ‘The Congress is a political organization seeking political change in India. Much as it does believe in social service it is of opinion that social betterment can be brought about only through political and economic changes and not to any large extent by social service. Therefore, the Congress must necessarily concentrate on the struggle for power. No number of ashrams of the kind you mention will transfer the power from the foreigner to Indian representatives.’ ‘Letter to Sakarben K. Vyas, December 6 1929’, Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 1973, vol. 4: p112.
There was perceptible impatience with Gandhi’s emphasis on social revival than on political issues. His writings in his journals attracted derision from politically inclined public who did not find any politics in his articles. Such objections arose from differing perspectives on the content of Swaraj. As Gandhi would repeat that his Swaraj would not mean mere transfer of power from British to Indian hands. Gandhi’s Swaraj was ‘regulated power in the hands of thirty crores of people’. He called it variously but most succinctly described through the mythical phrase of ‘Ramarajya’, a rule of ‘dharma’.

Gandhi had been made aware of this impatience when this India would not even buy the requisite yarn to fulfill the membership requirement for Congress membership. Gandhi was sorely unable to convince his people of the need to undertake constructive work if India was to achieve true independence. In the political arena his symbolism was a potent force. Educated India was full of scepticism when it came to Gandhi’s ‘inner voice’ determining the national agenda. It was his ‘inner voice’ which would transform salt into the epicenter of the national upsurge. It was not unscientific as people of Nehru’s denomination thought. It sprang from a knowledge base that had been acquired through wide and deep travel and sustained introspection. It was like data collected, inferences drawn and then posited against the unfolding situation. Conclusions thus drawn became the foundation of his political action. On the political front however, he could show the effectiveness of his symbolism and thus silence his critics. But on the constructive programmes he could not carry the conviction among his critics. It required long gestation period to show the substantial result and needed a dedicated band of workers, an extremely rare commodity.

There were men and women, who, under inspiration from Gandhi, had taken to Khadi wearing, worked in AISA and then had given up when yield did not match their enthusiasm. George Joseph was one such convert reconverted into critique who now thought that the Khadi would not survive the creator of the movement.

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248 Bitter as Poison, YOUNG INDIA, September 5 1929, (CWMG vol.XLI, 275)
249 Anarchy of thought!, Navajivan, October 20 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 23)
Gandhi’s constructive programme of Khadi did not serve ‘the fundamental need of this nation’. Khadi was afflicted with ‘fundamental economic defect’, he argued.

'It costs far too much to produce and to buy, and is, consequently, unjust to the consumer. My experience of khaddar is that it results in injustice to the producer also. The women, the spinners, who are at the root of khaddar, working for 10 hours a day, have got to be content with a wage less than sufficient for her physical maintenance. It is no answer to say that the country is stricken with famine, that there are millions of people without occupation. I refuse to accept that argument. Wages would not be sufficient to maintain the worker, much less her family. That is to my mind the hopeless ineradicable and inexorable vice that attaches to khaddar. That is why today, in spite of 7 or 8 years of labour by Gandhiji, and in spite of lakhs of money poured like water into the organization of the industry, the production of khaddar is infinitely small compared to the magnitude of the problem that has got to be solved."

Gandhi saw all such criticism as ‘impatience’. Gandhi said Joseph brought no new argument in support of his summary rejection of Khadi ‘but quotes as facts what he himself used to refute as fallacies’. Khadi did not cost more than mill-textile as ideally its producers were to be its consumers too. Women took to spinning only in their spare hours and thus added to their income. ‘The earning from spinning is waste turned into wealth.’ Spinning was not conceived as a full day occupation. Khadi organization was built on the minimal of financial inputs. ‘No organization on a nationwide scale has been known to cost less in organizing than this has.’ Charkha had no alternative.251

S Ramanathan, AISA Tamil Nadu Secretary, was another. He was extremely harsh on Khadi once disenchantment took hold of him. Both declared disapproval of Khadi and advocated Khaki as the political weapon. In most cases, journey from Khadi to khaki was one of traveling a distance from non-violence to violence. For Gandhi a freedom won through the mite of military was negation of the democratic spirit and progress. Khadi was the spirit of ‘unarmed resistance before which the bayonet runs to rust and gunpowder turns to dust’. His ideal was a government that drew its legitimacy not from coercion but from its ability to affect conversion of dissent. 'If it is a change from white military rule to a brown, we hardly need make any fuss. At any rate the masses then do not count. They will be subject to the same spoliation as now if not even worse.'

251 A Military Programme, YOUNG INDIA, December 19 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 293)
Ramanathan’s critique is important because it repeats everything that had been said before and also because it comes in 30s, more than a decade after the movement of Khadi was started.

Ramanathan’s was an insider’s criticism. A close confidant of the father of the Self Respect Movement in Tamilnadu, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (who himself had been the president of the Provincial Khadi Board in 1925) Ramanathan was, as he said, ‘intimately connected with Khadi since its very inception’. During the early days of the non-co-operation movement he acted as salesman at the ‘very first Khadi sale depot’ that was then established in Tamilnadu. He had been the Secretary of the Provincial Board, and when the All India Spinners Association (AISA) was established, he was again appointed as its Secretary, a position at which he remained for the next three years. During these years, as he said, ‘I wandered through the villages carrying the charkha on my head coaxing the women to take back the wheel which they were slowly discarding. I scoured the countryside in search of weavers who would tackle the coarse hand spun yarn which they had long since rejected in preference to the easy weaving mill twists. I toiled at improving the quality of Khadi. I tried to rationalise the industry by controlling the prices, creating reserves and eliminating competition.’ After all these efforts he was, in 1931, a disillusioned man, so disillusioned that, now, he termed Khadi a ‘superstition of recent origin’ which was doubly dangerous as it donned a ‘patriotic garb’. ‘After long and arduous practice’, Ramanathan had discovered that spinning wheel was dead and was surviving on ‘artificial respiration’ provided by Mahatma Gandhi. Now, his task was to rid India of the ‘superstition of Khadi’. On 31 May 1931, at a public meeting held at Lalgudi, Ramanathan gave vent to his feeling on Khadi. It was hard hitting but rhetorical in tone.

252 Ramanathan, S., Pattabhi Sitharamyya, N.S. Varadhachari, The Superstition of Khadi, A Discussion, 1931, p.3.
253 Ibid., p.1.
254 Ibid., p.2.
255 Ibid., p.3.
256 Ibid.
The theory on which Khadi movement based itself, Ramanathan observed in his speech, that was published in ‘Swarajya’, was unsound. Its programme embodied ‘primitive individualism’ and was inversely proportional to the progress of machinery. ‘Hand spinning implies in theory not merely the discarding of cotton mills but the rejection of all machinery.’ It was a pull to primitive times. Civilisation is a march of human being from individualism to collectivisation of lives. ‘Civilisation is but the process of transforming men who lead individual disconnected lives into a society of men who lead a collective life each toiling for the sake of others and each enjoying the fruits of labours of others.’ He went so far as to say, ‘The austere, self-sufficient, self-absorbent individualist is hardly a likeable being’. ‘Human lives interdepend; they interpenetrate; hence their beauty, hence their joy.’

Machinery, he said, was a necessary feature of his times. It was the fruit of the progress of science and science was the offshoot of human intelligence. Scientific discoveries pooled into a common heritage of all humanity. Any attempt to discard machinery would write India’s obituary. The economic crisis is not due to ‘overproduction but to unequal distribution’. It is the faulty use of the machinery and not its introduction which caused unemployment. Ramanathan provided an ingenious way to solve the displacement caused due to mechanisation. If the introduction of a particular machinery had potential to displace people then the solution lay not in shunning the machine but in reducing the work hour so as to accommodate all. ‘If we reconstruct society so that machinery is made to function for the benefit of many and not for the profit of few, we shall find machinery to be a great blessing.’ So he recommended mechanisation of agriculture. It was to be on the line of ‘machine

257 Ibid., pp.4-5.

258 By 1947 however Ramanathan had realised that scientific discoveries were not a common heritage of all humanity but business secrets which nations guarded jealously. In the preface to his book Gandhi and the Youth, published in February 1947 as second, much mellower edition, Ramanathan wrote about the ‘sinister attempt to deprive vast sections of humanity of economic and social equality which they justly lay claim to. Exploitation is sought to be carried on not merely by the might of the arms...but by a more sinister and ingenious method of secreting knowledge and science under the purdah’. But remedy he suggested was equally sinister and unethical. Continuing in the same vein he wrote: ‘Discoveries of science have to be stolen so that they may be distributed to those who have been kept out of them. Comparatively backward nations like Japan in olden days and Russia to-day have instituted widespread system of espionage to steal knowledge from the archives with in the closed doors of science. That is the task which faces the Indian Youth if they would see their motherland enjoy equal rights with other nations’. Little wonder that even in its mellower and refined version, if anything that was notable about the book, it was the intensity of vitriolic outpour on Gandhi and his ideologies.
farming' as in America and 'collective farming aided by machine' as in Russia. Indian farming practice bore nothing but cruelty. 'The sight of bullocks being goaded by boys who are themselves knee-deep in the mire challenges description. Often the bullocks finding themselves unequal to the task, lie down, prostrate and perform satyagraha....The plough boys grow desperate, twist the tails of the animals and begin to bite them.' After graphically detailing the 'horrors' of Indian farming, he almost temptingly asked his audience would they not like if the same land could be 'ploughed by a machine like the motorcar driven by you with all the ease and comfort with which you drive the motor car'? India's salvation lay, Ramanathan said, in throwing the takli away and in adopting the tractor. Machinery had its danger. But 'Let us be masterful and learn to enslave the machine'.

If Khadi was theoretically untenable then, Ramanathan asserted, it was practically unviable too. Self-spinning with the purpose of making one's own cloth was tried and given up. The professional spinners had neither the inclination nor the means to wear khaddar. 'The outstanding fact about the Khadi situation today is that those who spin do not wear khaddar and those that wear khaddar do not spin'. The slogan of symbolic spinning - the classes to spin so as to induce masses to do the same - had made 'spinning a farce'. All efforts to make the Congressmen to spin had gone in vain. The All India Spinners Association was constituted on a spinning franchise but soon the paucity of voters was so acutely felt that the executive was made to consist of life members. Amongst the professional spinners, it was only the women - 'the sex that has been brought up in the tradition of suffering and servitude'. Again, the fertile regions of the country where agriculture was an economic proposition, Ramanathan contended, there were no tradition of spinning charkha. It was only in the parched up deserts where one would find charkha being plied. 'They do what they can do to escape from hunger. They are driven by despair. The charkha is an alternative to suicide. The beggar's bowl is another alternative to suicide. Their economics are identical. You feed the spinner out of sense of patriotism. You feed the beggar out of divine compassion. Shall we found a society of beggars to fight the unemployment problem? It requires only a slight alteration of the

259 Ramanathan, S., (1931) op. cit., p.10.
260 Ibid., p.11
slogan and no change in the spirit, instead of “Be patriotic and buy” you have simply to say, “Be merciful and give”. 261

Khadi could show no improvement in its quality. 'The fault is not in the spinning but in the tools employed'. The right way to prevent exploitation and enforce boycott of foreign cloth, Ramanathan proposed, was to establish more mills. He even alleged that the figures purported by AISA were fudged.

Coming from a man of Ramanathan’s stature and that too from Tamil Nadu, it required a response from the Khadi establishment. Ramanathan had been Secretary to Tamil Nadu branch of AISA for years. The province of Tamil Nadu at the time, as noted by the Khadi Guide of 1927, when Ramanathan had been at its helm, was foremost both in the Khadi production and sale. Out of the total production of Khadi in the country nearly half was produced in Tamil Nadu. The goods produced at the chief centre of this province viz. Tiruppur were in great demand in all parts of India. It was this province, more almost than any other, that was meeting the need of less developed provinces. About forty percent of production of this province, was exported to other provinces and overseas while sixty percent was consumed within the province itself. The quality and the prices of the cloth produced in Tiruppur compared very favourably with those produced in other parts of India. The superior cotton used by expert weavers gave the cloth produced a peculiar softness and added attractiveness not produced by clothes of other provinces. The AISA had direct investment of Rs. 318, 144 in the province. There were thirteen centres of production and nineteen centres of sale, run departmentally by the AISA. The sale bhandars were turning out very good sales compared with the sale of the bhandars in the other provinces. The bhandars, departmental as well as those recognised and certified, sold only Tamil Nadu Khadi. Tamil Nadu was ahead of other provinces in production and sale but there were resources still awaiting development. The production activities of all the centres run directly by the provincial branch of the AISA furnished work to 12,829 spinners and 1138 weavers. There were 63 workers in the Tamil Nadu branch of the Association, not counting the menial staff. Of this number, 14 were workers who gave up their practice of law or their studies in college during the non-cooperation movement and were doing Congress work during 1920-21 and in the years

261 Ibid., pp12-3.
Would Ramanathan contend that the figures supplied by him in his capacity as Secretary of Tamil Nadu branch of AISA, based on which Khadi Guide of 1927 was published, were fudged?

His scathing critique of Khadi movement succeeded in eliciting response from two well known Khadi workers. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and N. S. Varadachari, both Secretary to their provincial branches of AISA in Andhra and Tamil Nadu respectively wrote their rejoinder to Ramanathan. The critique of Ramanathan contained no new points. During its tenure Khadi had faced many such criticism and Gandhi had himself patiently answered all such criticisms. Pattabhi wrote in his rejoinder that a response to Ramanathan was necessitated not for the novelty of argument, if any, that his criticism contained but because it came from the horse’s mouth.

Pattabhi’s rejoinder lacked the bite of Ramanathan. Although argumentative, it lacked lustre, perhaps emanating from the sentiment, as he wrote, that it was ‘too late in the day to attack the cult of khaddar on fundamentals’. ‘Khaddar is really the beaconfire that points the way to the vessels on the high seas straying for want of direction. It is the chart and compass that guides the mills and men to the haven of swadeshi and self-government.’ Pattabhi defended Khadi on the pretext of it being the handi-craft. ‘Machinery has its place in life but not to displace artistic crafts’, Pattabhi argued. He further wrote:

Craft life is based upon the preservation of the home in fact, upon the promotion of a sense of ownership in the craftsmen, upon the perpetuation of his trained skill and artistic instinct that he practices and above all upon the conserving of the sanctity of the home and its morals. It promotes creative energy and gives man the joy of making whole not parts, of being an artist, not a mechanic, of being a master not a coolie. Civilization as it is understood today is

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262 All India Spinners’ Association’s Khadi Guide, 1927, pp. 70-9
City-lzation and is for that very reason alien to the spirit of 85% of people that live in villages. 264

Gandhi minced no word when it came to the question of mills. He had been constantly saying that his propaganda was not against mills as there was enough space for both, Khadi and mill, to grow as long foreign cloths continued to be dumped in the country. He had even pleaded with the government to lift taxes on mill cloth. It was his concern for idleness in the villages that had him think of Khadi. It was however not a permanent solution.

‘If ever the time comes when the people of this country will have another, more honest occupation [other than spinning and weaving] and when the cotton can not be grown on the soil of this land, or when the cultivators themselves prefer to grow another, more profitable crop, then the vow of swadeshi cloth may serve no useful purpose. If future generations, reading the literature of this age, regard this vow as an immutable principle, and even at that time apply the principle of swadeshi to cloth, they will show themselves as foolish and will be acting like people who drown themselves in their ancestral well instead of swimming across it....My reason can not conceive of such a time ever coming. Whether it comes or not, there can be no two opinions that

in our present condition, Khadi is the purest form of swadeshi....' 265

What was India’s condition then? The three-fourths of the population of India, mainly rural and agricultural, depended solely on agriculture without any other supplementary occupation. A glance at the occupational statistics, in 1927, shows how the population stood to the sources of living. 266

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised Industries</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>2%</td>
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264 Ibid., p.28.
265 Nanda., op. cit., p. 56.
266 Khadi Guide,1927, p. 3.

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The above shows that the organised industries on which so much store was laid had not absorbed more than 1% of the population and had not been able to fill up in the least the gap left by the general extinction of almost all the old indigenous industries. Agriculture was still the only source of living for three quarters of the population. And what was the condition of this industry which was the sole means of living for so large a portion of the population? It yielded even in normal seasons a poor and precarious living. The holdings were too small and very often scattered to make cultivation profitable.

Pattabhi wrote in his ‘On Khaddar’ answering the allegation that spinning was not a paying proposition.

It is not. It has never been claimed to be such. At best it can not fetch more than one anna eight pies a day but what is the average income of the Indian? It is one anna nine pies per day and that including the millions of the millionaire. They yield the average of one anna nine pies for this millions, and there must be millions of population indeed who are nothing. Is it wrong then for these millions who are earning nothing to be provided with an occupation which yields them as much as the average income in India without dislodging them from their homes and families?\(^{267}\)

But these criticisms from insiders would not go unnoticed as soon after the civil-disobedience movement, remedial measures began to be formulated and much of criticisms were answered not by words but by suitable actions.

4.13. Conclusion

Khadi’s acceptance among the educated remained sluggish. Plying Charkha was seen as retrogressive.\(^{268}\) It could be argued that on the technological scale the educated had moved higher even if the masses had remained stagnant technologically.

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\(^{267}\) Sitharamayya, Pattabhi, On Khaddar, 1931, p.25

\(^{268}\) Even while Khadi proponents eulogized rural ingenuity. Acharya Roy reported of a carding bow that was in wide use in Chittagong region. The gut of the Suchia bow (the local bow is named after a Chittagong village named Suchia) is made of fibres of pineapple leaves and is supposed to last a week. It is surprising with what simple and cheap materials the finest processes can be gone through.' ‘Living on Spinning and Weaving’, Young India, May 15 1924, CWMG vol.24: 45.
What could perhaps be enthusiastically accepted by the villagers bred only scepticism among the middle class. For the educated therefore the charkha seemed an anachronism and the takli, doubly so. In November, 1926, during the Youth Week, at Ahmedabad, Mahadev Desai was giving a demonstration-lecture on the takli when some youth disturbed the gathering. Gandhi wrote criticising the youth for their lack of 'restraint, courtesy, humility and tolerance'.

Showing repugnance against the takli is like marching an army against an ant. A takli is a symbol of freedom, a mill that of dependence. How then can one dislike such a thing as a means of support?

Yet, educated carried least of respect for Charkha and Khadi. Doubts over its efficacy endured. 'Can it work? Can it succeed? Can we now plant again the Charkha in its old place of sanctity in every home? Is it not too late? Can India even if she wants to, isolate herself and get out of the clutches of industrialism? There was widespread skepticism about its longevity too. Most public men thought that the Khadi would not survive the creator of the movement. There were debates over the priority too. Educated were impatient with Gandhi's insistence on Khadi First slogan. Instead, they advocated Freedom First rationale. Once India had won her freedom, her national government could bring in Khadi agenda to fore, they argued. In Gandhi's conception a 'decent show' of Khadi was required before India could achieve her Swaraj. Further, he saw an ideal government in one which governed the least. Legislations were important in issues such as in-sanitary village living. But the same method of legislation did not apply to the Charkha.

On the contrary, Charkha was the precursor of every reform. Only if nation could concentrate its energy on the Charkha, it would pave the way for legislation where legislation was required. The bane of the country was not the drain of wealth, it

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269 'Culture', Navajivan, December 5 1926, (CWMG vol.32, 387-9)

270 Ibid.

271 The argument to which this lover of khaddar has been involuntarily and irresistibly drawn is Satan's old device. He always goes with us half way, and then suddenly insinuates that it is no good going further and points to the seeming impossibility of further 'Snares of Satan', YI, August 6 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 30)

272 Ibid., p118.

273 'Hookworm and Charkha', YI, August 27 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 123)
was not even the poverty. It was the enforced idleness, which then became a habit, for the peasantry. Idleness was the root of all the ills. ‘A nation that is starving has little hope or initiative left in it.’ Only plying of Charkha could result in the country’s reinvigoration. The energy required could only come from people, and could not be enforced by the government. 274 But he needed the necessary force to inspire acceptance of Charkha among the populace. The history of the world shows that no enterprise prospered without protection or assistance. Protection could come either from the state or the society or self. For Khadi programme Gandhi desired harnessing the power of society and self. But it is strange that while Gandhi believed in Khadi campaign at the people’s level, without any governmental intervention, he needed the active participation of the educated Indian in taking Charkha to the real target, the poor. Why didn’t he focus on poor alone?

Gandhi complained of his failure to convince the educated class as a body of the truth of charkha’s essential position. There is obviously something wanting in the reform or the reformer if he does not get the members of the society to which he belongs to take up his reform. Imbuing the masses to non-co-operate with the foreign and mill spun cloth and establish closest co-operation with cloth of their own spinning and weaving, in Gandhi’s conception, could not be done without the aid of the educated class. ‘if hundreds of educated man and women were not helping me in spreading the message of the spinning wheel and khaddar, it would not have made the progress it has, and if the progress is not as fast as it might be, it is because the educated class as a whole stands aside from the khaddar movement... Masses... lack the heart to do what their mind approves... If the strength was in my gift, the masses would have been transformed by now. But I know my helplessness in that direction’. 275 Gandhi maintained, ‘If [the middle class take to Khadi] people will take to Khadi very soon. It is, therefore, the middle class which is to blame, whether for a serious lapse or for an adequate effort. If this class—the educated class—understands the importance of Khadi it will not be difficult to spread its use’. 276

274 Ibid.
275 Ibid., ‘About Educated Classes’, Young India, 15 October 1925, p.331.
276 Ibid., p.271.
Despite his failure he persevered with the educated to convert their heart. Referring to the Swarajists he said, 'I do not wish violently to wrest the Congress from the educated India... After all, those who have led an active political life in the old fashion, can not possibly be expected to sit idle, whilst 'dreamers' like me expect to evolve an intensely active programme out of a 'harmless toy' like the spinning wheel. They brought the Congress into being, and I must wait for their conversion before the Congress can become a purely spinning association'. Making the educated as the carrier of his idea was fine as long as people of this class could relate with the poor. Gandhi did achieve notable success in collecting exceptional people who were, though city-bred and educated, magnificent in their dedication to the cause. But it tended to remain limited to more exceptional people.

As Gandhi travelled, the problems of rural India began to unfold before Gandhi. Most glaring, besides poverty, was that of unequal distribution of agricultural land. In most parts of India the agriculturist was a mere tenant, at the mercy of the zemindar, and dragged on a miserable existence. 'Can't we solve the problem', asked a friend to Gandhi, 'by dispossessing these zamindars and distributing their land among the poor?' The question hit the most appropriate nail. Almost in similar vain Nehru too had complained as saying that remedy suggested by Gandhi for the poverty amelioration had not touched 'the fundamental causes of the poverty'. 'You do not

<table>
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<td>U.P.</td>
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Source: Khadi Guide, 1927, p. 3.

277 Ibid., 'Why not surrender completely?', Young India, 20 August 1925, p. 87.

278 The total cultivated area in British India was estimated to be near 225 million acres. This hardly leaves an acre per head to the agricultural population. The average size of a holding in different provinces was stated to be as under as published in Khadi Guide, 1927, p. 3:.

279 'Patriot's wail', Young India, February 4 1926, (CWMG vol.29, 362)
say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India or against the capitalist exploitation of both the workers and the consumers'.

Gandhi pointed at inability to do anything basic while the government was alien. He felt more important than the legislative reform was internal cleansing. It was possible only when volunteers took the village reform as their life mission. Nothing could be gained by forcibly dispossessing the landlords of their land. What was really required was the change of their heart. ‘When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants’ woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them the major part of their produce keeping only enough for themselves.’ For this task too he desired to enroll the educated youth. ‘The educated classes should in a spirit of humble service, go into villages and study the condition of the people’, he wrote.

Although appreciative of the sacrifices made for the Bolshevism, Gandhi did not agree with its methods. Bolshevism aimed at the abolition of the institution of the private property. This, according to Gandhi, was only an ‘application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realms of economics’. If this ideal could be made acceptable to the people by their own accord or by peaceful persuasion there would be nothing like it. Bolshevism, however, not only supported the use of force but freely sanctioned it for the expropriation of private property and maintenance of the collective State ownership of the same. Gandhi was of firm opinion that nothing enduring could be built on violence. Those who thought of violent way to land reform were ‘vainly flattering themselves with hope of success’. Further, in their calculation, the agriculturists never figured, nor were they aware of ground realities. ‘The oppressed need no other education, except in satyagraha and non-co-operation. A slave is slave because he consents to slavery. If training in physical resistance is possible, why should that in spiritual resistance be impossible?’

Khadi was Gandhi’s answer to land reform question. As the pressure on land had increased due to the population explosion and the destruction of allied rural

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280 'Letter from Jawaharlal Nehru', January 11 1928, (CWMG vol.35, 540-4) Appendix X
281 'Patriot’s wail', Young India, February 4 1926, (CWMG vol.29, 363)
282 'Entering Villages', Navajivan, May 31 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 177)
283 My Notes: Bolshevism, Navajivan, October 21 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 380)
284 'Patriot’s wail', Young India, February 4 1926, (CWMG vol.29, 362)
industries, more and more people wanted to carve out a limited cake for themselves. Violence as a means to effect social change was farthest in his mind. And any attempt to rearrange land holdings in rural India through state sponsored violence or even through groups advocating violent method of social change would have meant a bloody India and Swaraj of few. The alternative was to create a system by which pressure on land was eased. This was possible only when alternative means of livelihood was created. India’s traditional industry of spinning had been destroyed by imports from Britain. If people were persuaded to boycott British cloth and adopt Khadi, then an occupation away from land could be provided to the people. Here use of machinery could have reduced the utilization of manpower - India’s most important asset - but at the same time a power which without proper employment could detonate itself into senseless dissipation of energy - and thus population would have gone work less. Hence the Gandhian abhorrence of machinery - of which the most important emphasis was on the employment aspect. 285

Khadi was the product of that concern. It was always a difficult proposition to create an alternative structure than shooting off people in the name of equitable distribution of wealth. He chose the difficult proposition than the easy method of eliminating probable threats which does not just deceive but also keeps rising like a phoenix to haunt. Khadi was this alternative system. And to make it a viable proposition he went most methodically in erecting it. He created an organization to take care of Khadi research and development, its business dealings, its active army of believers. An organization created by the political body but autonomous in all its dealings. The effort that went into the making of Khadi was enormous, greater than killing a landlord or getting killed in the process. The latter chapter discusses this aspect of Khadi movement.

His answer to government's repressive method was to ask people to take to 'Khaddar, Khaddar, Khaddar'. 286 Civil disobedience was only response that one could render to an unjust government. 'But disobedience to be civil implies discipline,

285 'I do want cleanliness in capitalism as well as in labour. And I would certainly resist capitalism being used to exploit the resources of the country for the use of the few, be they foreigners or home-born.' 'Note on Bhagwandas's Letter', Young India, May 8 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 15.
286 Interview to Swarajya, March 7 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 239)
thought, care, and attention. Khadi was one solemn engagement that sobered angry retort. Civil Disobedience was a substitute for an armed revolt. Even if one got Swaraj through armed rebellion, it was impossible to retain it. 'A bloody revolution will not succeed in India. The masses will not respond. A movement in which masses have no active part can do no good to them. A successful bloody revolution can only mean further misery for the masses. For it would be still foreign rule for them.' Khadi centric non-violent struggle had transformed a meek people into bolder activists. 'A non-violent struggle necessarily involves construction on a mass scale.' He wished he could isolate Khadi from political vicissitudes. Yet, wearing Khadi was a matter of non-violence, politics and economics. In Gandhi's advocacy of spinning the politics was linked with yarn. Charkha was the machine on which he pinned his political faith. According to him people's collective strength lay in spinning yarn. Power of collective thus achieved would invisibly influence everything. The quid-pro-quo between him and Congress was that while they took responsibility for the spread of Khadi, he would strategize the political future.

Gandhi presented Charkha and Khadi production as something occupying an autonomous space independent from fetters of the government. Being primarily autonomous, it proportionally grew with the widening frontiers of public domain. The stretching of independent, autonomous public domain could threaten the sense of security and self-importance of an entrenched government. It could indiscriminately resort to deadly recoil to establish its supremacy. Charkha being a non-violent force it did not enable the government avail its coercive arms. By expanding the autonomous bandwidth, the Khadi movement nurtured a deep political consequence for the Empire. It rarely got noticed by its own supporters though the colonial government did acknowledge it. Khadi movement being primarily inwardly directed held important lessons for the other two components of constructive work, namely the eradication of untouchability and forging of communal unity. If middle class was to work at organizing the nitty-gritty of Khadi Movement, it shall bring a primarily

287 Speech at Public Meeting, Madras, March 7 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 246)
288 A Revolutionary's defence, YOUNG INDIA, February 12 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 140)
289 Quintessence of Non-violence, Navajivan, March 15 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 313)
290 Interview to the Statesman, May 1 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 1)
291 Reminiscences of Kathiawar II: Politics, Navajivan, March 8 1925, (CWMG vol.26, 253)
upper-caste activist into an organic link with the lower-caste clientele. That would be the body-blow to the age-old practice of untouchability that had flourished on the segregation and hierarchy. The movement was designed also to bring a communal cohesion owing to the fact that it was mostly Muslims who would weave hand-spun yarn of Hindus.

There was no published or implied rule of Government service forbidding Government servants to wear Khadi. Khadi was not anti-government. But impression was such that many an unspoken rules prevailed. Gandhi felt that it was just the matter of time when government would strike a body-blow to the Khadi network. The time would come when Khadi would gain enough strength to oust foreign cloth. There was subtle propaganda against Khadi through government machinery. Least of all it was openly mocked. A person wearing Khadi gained notoriety in the government circle. The person was the first and immediate suspect and was shadowed. As a matter of protection against such an eventuality Gandhi would time and again reiterate Khadi as a pure economic concern. He would refuse to admit that Khadi was a rebel's uniform. Any admission to the contrary would have jeopardized Khadi's survival. But he also disapproved of Congressmen's reluctance to don Khadi. Khadi thereby hung between the need to keep it apolitical economic enterprise and as a symbol of national resurgence by making Congressmen wear it. As it oscillated between these two ideological poles the government remained suspect of its agenda. It was not solely driven by economics, though Gandhi needed a captive market constituting of Congressmen to fuel its demand. He needed Congressmen not just as captive consumers but also voluntary producers. He was loath in accepting the argument that Khadi could be given patronage after the Swaraj was won. He wanted Swaraj to be won through Khadi.292 'Are we angels merely waiting for the establishment of national Government to flap our wings?', Gandhi asked exasperatedly. Establishment of Khadi into viable network of production and consumption was test of India's capacity for self-governance. He however vehemently differed from government when it imputed similar test.

292 'My swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization. I want to write many new things, but they must be all written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with decent interest.' 'Open letter to AICC members', Before June 26 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 288.