Chapter Five

Khadi:
Agency, Activism, and Agenda
The Khadi movement consisted of increased production of hand-spun yarn, woven into clothes through handloom; marketing it efficiently and cheaply; and then, converting consumers in big number so as to keep the demand apace with supply. Efficient production and distribution of Khadi was first inevitable step. Second step was to turn prejudices against the fabric into a pride-statement and raise its acceptability among the consumers.

Khadi's economic viability was dependent on proportion of its production matching quantum of sales. Leaving some exceptional times during which its sales surged enough to clear the stagnant stock, Khadi's production and sales rarely complemented each other. It was handicapped by tardy growth in its sales. Its inherent defect continued to haunt its popularity and sales. Customers were hard to come by. During the non-cooperation movement, Congress had appealed to the sentiments of the people. Charged by the call some people had discarded foreign clothes; some had even enthusiastically incinerated them and adopted Khadi. But soon Khadi fell into disuse. Same old charge against the fabric came to fore. Its quality was defective. Women found its heaviness a great burden to wear and wash. It got dirtied and crumbled quite rapidly. It was certainly not a children's cloth. It demanded high maintenance. It was dearer than the mill-textile. The rich people do not like to wear this cloth as it does not satisfy their tastes, while the poor cannot afford to wear it, considering its price, washing charges, and other expenses, complained a correspondent to Gandhi.

In Gandhi's conception, 'Khadi is only seemingly dear. I have pointed out in these pages that it is wrong to compare khadi with other cloth by comparing the prices of given lengths. The cheapness of khadi consists in the revolution of one's taste. The wearing of khadi replaces the conventional idea of wearing clothes for ornament by that of wearing them for use. Opinion is divided as to the want of durability of khadi. Division of opinion is based probably on difference of experience. Different experience is inevitable so long as we have not arrived at uniformity in spinning.'

Notes: Faulty Production?; Young India, August 7 1924, CWMG vol. 24:

Defects of Khadi were enumerated as:

a) The stuff is very heavy; the ladies do not tolerate it.
b) On account of its weight, it is not easy to wash.
c) It is not a children's cloth, for their clothing requires constant washing and it is very difficult to do so in case of khaddar.
d) It has got no variety and we cannot give fast colours to it.
e) It catches dust.
f) It is dearer than the mill-cloth.

Gandhi termed the arguments against Khadi as 'argument of luxury and laziness'. 'If we desire swaraj, we must be prepared to work and give up luxurious tastes, at least for the time being.... The ladies have no right to grumble at the heaviness of their khaddar if they are too lazy to spin fine. Khaddar is eminently children's cloth, if we would clothe them for protection and not for show. Khaddar is capable of giving as much variety as mill-cloth. But
Every one of the producing centres complained of production glut and piling surplus. For instance, Punjab excelled in spinning activities. Her women were skilled spinners and each generation of women passed the art in the succeeding girls. Weavers too were in abundance. Therefore, no logistical bottlenecks stifled production of Khadi. But buyers were elusive and stock at the Khadi Depot of Congress Committee continuously surged. Similar were the predicament of each of the producing provinces. This, when whole stock of Khadi throughout India was not more than worth rupees twenty lacs. It was also when India's import bill for clothes still hovered around sixty crores. It spoke volumes about the organization, quality and reach of the Khadi. As Gandhi himself admitted one Indian millionaire could have bought off the shelf whole of Khadi produced. He appealed to the patriotic sentiments of mill-owners. He implored public institutions to make their cloth purchases in Khadi. But 'human spirit' in them was not sufficiently moved perhaps. Gandhi now did not blame people for their seeming apathy towards Khadi. Instead, his attention was geared to motivate Congress workers. Spinning resolution that made it obligatory on Congress delegates to spin with monthly regularity was the first step towards the creation of a captive customer base. Introduction of spinning franchise in the Congress constitution was another.

---

3 'I have referred to the stock lying idle in the Punjab. The same thing applies to almost every khadi-producing province. And yet the whole stock of khadi throughout India will not be more than twenty lakhs at the outside. Compare this with crores of rupees worth of foreign stock. Is it not a sad commentary on our work and the patriotism of monied men? One millionaire can buy out the whole of the present stock of khadi and sell at cheap rates to the poor. Yes, even a patriotic mill-owner can do so without hurting himself. Tens of thousands of men and women flock to our meetings. They can buy up all the khadi in one single day without having to pauperize themselves. Public institutions can make their cloth purchases in khadi without losing anything or much. Bombay has always been to the fore in such matters. If Bombay willed it, its immense population can buy out the present surplus without much hurt to her two million pockets.' 'Notes: Luxury and Laziness', Young India, June 5 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 185.

4 'If the whole nation, irrespective of parties, co-operates, it will be found that we can banish foreign cloth and with it pauperism from our midst in an incredibly short space of time. Nothing is so easy as the organization of this khadi work and if we cannot as a nation organize this simple thing, we shall organize nothing else that is constructive on any large national scale.' 'Notes: Non-representatives', YI, July 24 1924, (CWMG vol.24,437)
Gandhi’s formula was that each province consumed what it produced. Local consumption of locally produced Khadi lay at the center of the movement. Local manufacture, local consumption and local assistance were the three principles lying at the crux of the movement. Only surplus provinces were asked to send their produce outside. Such an arrangement generally did not work. Sales exigency, therefore, made him raise sales pitch in ‘chief towns such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, etc.,’ which were themselves not effective producing centres. Barring some exceptions, all the Khadi producing provinces were looking for market in the other provinces or in the metropolitan cities. That did not mean that they produced in surplus, well beyond their needs. It only exposed the limitation of demand in their areas. The chief Khadi producing regions were Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Bihar. Their manufacturing of Khadi was dependent upon the availability of demands from other consuming provinces. There was an urgent need to give an impetus to the local demand in these areas. Only an expanded local market could provide incentive for increasing the manufacturing potential. Bengal with Khadi Prathisthan and Abhoy Ashram was one province that produced and consumed locally all its Khadi. Khadi Prathisthan used many techniques and adopted advertising aids such as magic lanterns to explain, convert and recruit increasing number of local Khadi consumers. These large organizations also wove Khadi keeping in the mind the tastes and requirements of the middle class consumers. Gandhi asked other producing provinces to emulate ‘Bengal’s worthy example’. ‘I feel that if the workers all over India will copy the example of Bengal and organize themselves for local sales, much time and money will be saved and the progress of Khadi will be much more.’

Khadi production and sales were also affected by the prejudices that the public held. Spinning was thought to make an upper-caste man a sudra. Some argued that it went against the principle of division of labour by requiring every one to spin. For others, it was contrary to the principles of economics when it required even higher-earning members to spin. These were the same old nagging questions that kept raising

---

5 Bengal’s Distinctions, Navajivan, March 21 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 151)
6 ‘Bengal alone has steadily refused to depend upon customers outside Bengal for the sale of her Khadi. Although her production has been uniformly progressive, she has sold all her Khadi in Bengal. The two large Khadi organizers—the Khadi Pratishthan and the Abhoy Ashram—have somehow or other set their face resolutely against sending their Khadi outside Bengal for sale. The result is that they weave Khadi according to the requirements of the middle class.’ Notes: Bengal’s Worthy Example, Young India, April 1 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 210)
its head again and again.\textsuperscript{7} The feeling that spinning was a womanly vocation persisted. In societal memory, spinning, for centuries, was associated with women. As one man wrote to Gandhi, 'Let your great programme of charkha and khaddar be confined to women for the present.' Such arguments, Gandhi averred, were born out of ignorance. Women were most of the time politically immune leading their lives in seclusion. It was through men alone that political message could be imparted to women. 'Women are...not designed to organize on a large scale. She is not inventive. Man, being restless and often destructive, is inventive. .... All the greatest inventions have been made by men', Gandhi argued.\textsuperscript{8} Further while women wielded some power in domestic sphere, they rarely acted independent of their men-folk. Khadi Movement was organized by men. It was men who were making all the necessary technical improvements in the wheel. Men and women, both were equal partners in the organization of Khadi movement. The majority of AISA workers were male. Most of spinners were female. No gender had any exclusive monopoly over any specific vocation, Gandhi said.\textsuperscript{9}

Gandhi also learnt with experience that it was easier to rouse enthusiasm in rural population than in the educated classes.\textsuperscript{10} Urban, educated Indians saw his writings in journals as repetitive.\textsuperscript{11} Many in liberal group resented association of

\textsuperscript{7} 'Some question that constantly pestered Gandhi were:
 a) Does not spinning and weaving make a man a Sudra?
 b) Is it not contrary to principles of economics that even one who can earn much more through his brains should make a living by spinning and weaving?
 c) Does not spinning and weaving by all destroy the principle of division of labour?' 'Three Questions', Hindi Navjivan, June 22 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 282)

\textsuperscript{8} Notes: Not by Deputy, YI, September 25 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 153)

\textsuperscript{9} Not Man's Work, YI, June 11 1925, (CWMG vol.27, 220)

\textsuperscript{10} This was out of differing perceptions about the English rule. For Gandhi it was to change India's character and he wanted to resist it through his home-grown philosophy of Khadi. The logical outcome of the Government policy is to Europeanize India and, immediately we have become Europeanized, our English masters will gladly hand over the reins of Government to us. We would be welcomed as their willing agents. I can have no interest in that deadly process save to put the whole of my humble weight against it. 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 A.I.C.C. Members, Before June 26, 1924, CWMG vol. 24:

\textsuperscript{11} 'The central truth is that the wheel furnishes occupation and a small income to the millions who must have an additional income if they are not to starve. It is not possible to put up a handloom in every home. A loom in every village, a charkha in every home is the formula. If a spinning-mill is put up in every Taluka, it will result in nationalizing the exploitation of the many by the few. All cannot be employed in a Taluka mill. Moreover, we must import the machinery needed for over 2,000 Talukas. And the experts for managing and working the mills will have to be trained. Mills
Khadi with the preparation for civil disobedience. Others in intelligentsia opposed Khadi movement on the ground that it would bring the ruination of the investors in the Indian mills. Even some dedicated workers were assailed by persisting doubts regarding the efficacy of Charkha. The biggest mental obstacle in the progress of Khadi enterprise was its presumed technological obsoleteness. Many an educated people, even the active Khadi workers, thought industrialism something as inevitable march of superior technology. In the face of such determined world force, spinning wheel and all the sciences associated with it seemed incongruous. It was true that to carry over its doubtful durability and a certain dearness its appeal had to extend beyond the arguments of sentiments and simplicity. To Gandhi however, it was not the two oft-alleged defects of Khadi—dearness and coarseness—that made its progress tardy. But the principal causes were people's idleness, lack of proficiency in spinning, and apathy for the miseries of the poor. He regarded the arguments against Khadi as that of 'luxury and laziness'.

A Liberal Party member wrote: 'I have been thinking and discussing the question of khaddar with my colleagues. I find that there is no difference of opinion as regards the merit of khaddar, but the hitch arises the moment they associate the movement for the spread of khaddar with your declaration that it is a preparation for civil disobedience. If it stood apart and did not form an item of the Non-co-operation movement, I think that the support to this propaganda will become wider and more universal.'

'Let the correspondent derive consolation from the fact that the spinning-wheel has to displace nearly sixty crores worth of foreign cloth before it can touch the Indian mill-cloth. But for reasons I have stated in these pages, every one of us must simply think of khaddar to the exclusion of even Indian mill-cloth. Our mills need no patronage from anyone else. They have their own agencies and peculiar methods of advertising their wares. For those who are within the Congress beat to have the option of using mill-spun is to kill the khaddar industry. Khaddar needs all the protection that can be given to it before it can produce an impression upon the market.'

If we desire swaraj, we must be prepared to work and give up luxurious tastes, at least for the time being. The ladies have no right to grumble at the heaviness of their khaddar if they are too lazy to spin fine. Khaddar is eminently children's cloth, if we would clothe them for protection and not for show. Khaddar is capable of giving as much variety as mill-cloth. But it requires revival of the original skill of our forefathers. Khaddar is today dearer than mill-cloth because we have not yet put this national cottage industry on a sound basis. Experience of hundreds of khaddar-wearers is that it having simplified their taste, though it is dearer yard for yard, the quantity required being much less than before, khaddar wear is undoubtedly cheaper. For the poor people khaddar need not be dearer, because they can grow their own cotton and gin, card, spin and weave it themselves. Notes: Luxury and Laziness, June 5 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 186)
After the passage of spinning resolution, Satyagraha Ashram was inundated with applications for slivers, spindles, holders, wheels, carding-bows and ginning instruments. It was a healthy sign of spreading concern and yet it exposed the limitations of the network. It was not possible to organize hand-spinning of national magnitude if every spinner had to be supplied with slivers from a distant central place. Slivers, being very soft things, held the possibility of getting damaged during the transit. It's crushing was prevented if packed in metal jars, which however were costlier than the slivers themselves. Nor was it possible to work spinning successfully if wheels, spindles, etc., had to be received from one place. The spinning-wheels were difficult to pack and cost much transportation surcharge. Depots were needed for the supply of all accessories and repairs. Gandhi desired conversion of Congress into a workshop for the supply of raw material and implements and a warehouse for the sale of khaddar.\textsuperscript{17} If Khadi was to spread it could only be through the decentralized channels. All India Spinners' Association (AISA), founded in late 1925, was an effort towards the creation of a decentralized network. One factor that catalysed establishment of AISA was lack of logistics with the district and provincial Congress committees to manage the subscription yarn. The authorized Congress organizations were not prepared to use the yarn. Most of subscription yarn was being wasted by colossal indifference. There were complaints of rodents destroying the collected yarn. Only Satyagraha Ashram was such developed as to use the yarn suitably but it was not entitled to receive the subscription directly. AISA was a remedial measure for the existing problem.\textsuperscript{18} AISA, however, was preceded by other efforts to organize the Khadi network.

In July 1921, with a resolution eliciting general information on Khadi works, the Congress began its association with Khadi. At the Satyagraha Ashram, Khadi work was organized under the supervision of Maganlal Gandhi. In those early days, it was difficult to sell Khadi that was produced. Cadres as well as leaders had to go on hawking trips. Motilal's hawking on Allahabad streets attracted ridicule from the

\textsuperscript{17} 'Our interest must be identical with and must merge in the country's.' 'Notes: To an Inquirer', YI, July 31 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 481)

\textsuperscript{18} 'It is in order to remedy such defects that the proposal to form an All-India Spinners' Association has been made by me. Through it, if the Congress retains spinning as an optional part of the franchise and appoints the proposed body as its agency to receive spinning subscriptions, the defects mentioned can be obviated.' 'Notes: Congress Yarn', YI, August 27 1925, (CWMG vol.28, 115)
The Times referred to Khadi as the ‘Congress grave clothes’. ‘Even in India it must be recognized that Pandit Nehru is making an ass of himself’, it added. Gandhi said it was the ‘venomous abuse’ of Khadi. He asked other national leaders to emulate the example and gave prominent space to other hawking endeavours in his journals. Hawking helped create a local market for locally manufactured Khadi.

Brand-building and organization of network was a simultaneous exercise. In May 1922 the Congress Working Committee entrusted Seth Jamnalal Bajaj with the organisation of a special Department of Khadi for which the Committee sanctioned Rs.17 lakh. The Department comprised of three divisions a) Technical Instruction b) Production c) Sale. Technical Instruction was to be provided at the Sabarmati Ashram. Maganlal Gandhi was its in-charge. Every province was invited to send students to institute for a six month’s course, to be trained in all the process of Khadi production. Students trained here were engaged for the organisation of the Khadi centres or similar training institutes in their respective provinces.

The department of production was to aim at the co-ordination of inter provincial work and the standardisation of yarn or cloth. The department ordinarily did not interfere with the administration of local organisations. Lakhmidas Purshottam was director and under him were many travelling inspectors. The sales department was to open Khadi stores in select places where Provincial Congress Committees were unable to provide facilities for consumers. It was under the supervision of Vithaldas Jerajani. Jamnalal Bajaj was responsible for the co-ordination between the departments. The annual budget provided was:

- a) Technical Instruction-Rs.25,000
- b) Sales Department-Rs.2,00,000
- c) Production Department -Rs.20,000
- d) Propaganda Information Bureau-Rs. 1,00,000
- e) Loans to Provinces-13,55,000

In January 1924, an All India Khadi Board was established. It was sanctioned by the AICC held at Cocanada. Its term of office was for three years. Headquartered

---

19 'The completeness of the Congress collapse, the utter futility of the so-called Congress creed, and the total absence among Congress supporters of a single reasonable political idea are illustrated by a telegram despatched in all earnestness from Allahabad.' 'Pandit Nehru and Khaddar', YI, April 15 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 287)

20 He was solely responsible for the administration of the finances. All applications for the loans was to be forwarded by the provinces to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj who would submit them to the Working Committee with his own recommendation, provided that in case of emergency Seth Jamnalal might grant loans not exceeding Rs. 5000 in anticipation of the Working Committee’s sanctions.
at Sabarmati, Jamnalal Bajaj was appointed its president-cum-treasurer and Shankarlal Banker, the Secretary. Among the six members on Board were Shaukat Ali, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maganlal Gandhi and others. The resolution also appointed six auditing Inspectors for different zones; they were to officiate from under an Auditor.

Jamnalal’s appointment as the president-cum-treasurer of the Board was significant. In the absence of Gandhi, who was then undergoing a six year jail term, his appointment showed the confidence that Gandhi reposed in him. An adopted heir to a rich marwari merchant of Wardha, then a nondescript town in Central Maharashtra, Jamnalal, was attracted to Gandhi, as his biographer avers, by his ethical and spiritual outlook. Wardha, later in 30s and 40s became a laboratory for Gandhi’s village reconstruction experiments, in whose making Jamnalal played an important role.

During India’s mass campaign for freedom, a new weapon was forged out of threat-perception that Indians held against Britain’s textile industry. The new weapon was Charkha and its product Khadi, hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. Early nationalists squarely laid blame for the destruction of India’s flourishing clothing industry on British machinations. It was they who taught Indians that ‘the English had sucked our life-blood’. Gandhi too surmised that it was not the machinery but the machinations of the East India Company that led to the destruction of India’s craft-

---

21 'He was one of the first and few businessmen who burnt their boats to join Gandhi’. He was made the Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Nagpur Congress session. Soon after the Nagpur Congress, at the instance of Gandhi, he was nominated as one of the two Treasurers of the Congress. It was under him that the mammoth task of collecting a crore of rupees, under the Bezwada programme was initiated and successfully completed. Nanda, op.cit.,

22 Money lending and cotton trade were the main occupations of the Bajaj family. The main stay of the family business, however, was trade in cotton. Its purchase, ginning, press-packing, and sale to textile mills in India and abroad. Although himself lacking any college education, Jamnalal was involved in number of social activities including opening of schools and student hostels in and around Wardha. Gandhi’s studied abstention from politics when he landed in India in 1915 drew Jannnalal to him. He had then contributed a sum of Rs. 30,000 for the construction of the ashram at Sabarmati. It was loyalty to Gandhi which later drew Jamnalal into the political arena.

23 The cotton industry of Manchester acquired a folkloric imagery in India. Writing in 1909, in Hind Swaraj, Gandhi stated: 'It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handcraft has all but disappeared'. Anthony J. Parel, ed., Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and other Writings, Foundation Books, Delhi, 1997, p.107.

24 Parel, ed., Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and other Writings, p.15. Gandhi was explaining of role that the early nationalists played in vitalizing the consciousness of Indians.
‘compact of silence’ for a year\textsuperscript{55}, Gandhi took to train traveling with a vengeance rarely witnessed among the contemporary politicians.\textsuperscript{56} He traveled third class and then shot off missives complaining passengers’ plight.\textsuperscript{57} ‘The latrines were in a dangerously filthy state’\textsuperscript{58} and still he would not allow hapless Kasturba to take the benefit of comparatively clean second class bathrooms. He had expected to join Servants’ of India Society at the behest of Gokhale, ‘friend, philosopher and guide’\textsuperscript{59}, whose death in February 1915, however, left Gandhi ‘without shelter’. Immediately

\textsuperscript{55} In a letter to Gokhale, Gandhi wrote: ‘I shall scrupulously observe the compact of silence for one year after my arrival in India.’ \textit{CWMG}, vol.12: 360.

\textsuperscript{56} Politically, in 1915, India was beginning to show signs of renewed vigour. An attempt was being made to put aside the stupefying spell of Surat which had splintered the nationalist platform and dampened the national upsurge. Tilak had been released, and with the Surat sentiment on the wane, he naturally became the focus of a revitalized Indian polity. His re-entry into the Congress was facilitated not just by the demise of his most vociferous critic, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta but also by the aggressive campaigning done on his behalf by Madame Annie Besant. She, in recognition of her contribution to India, was chosen to preside over the annual Congress session of 1916, at Lucknow. Later, she and Tilak founded their respective Home Rule Leagues to expedite India’s march to self rule. (Besant’s follower in League such as Omar Sobhani and Shankariall Banker later became close adherents of Gandhi.)

While, at Lucknow the politically established leaders were involved in hammering out a Hindu-Muslim Pact, Gandhi had been in the background, garnering support for the Indians settled in South Africa. He cajoled the daisful of leaders to allow him to put before the august Congress, a resolution on the system of indenture. He demanded stoppage of emigration, as it was an ‘evil which cannot be mended but only be ended’. Most of the leaders present hardly took notice of his plea. One man, an illiterate villager, named Rajkumar Shukla, however, saw, in him, a potential which made him pester Gandhi till he agreed to accompany him to Champaran. ‘Drawn more or less accidentally’ to the arena of indigo, Gandhi looked upon it more as a humanitarian mission than as a political campaign. Success here was easy. Soon, however, he found himself embroiled in a labour strike at Ahmedabad. He exhorted the mill owners to bind their working force with ‘silken thread of love’. The first serious conflict with the British authorities, however, was yet to take place and that happened at Kheda. ‘Authority’, he said while fighting for farmers’ right, ‘is blind and unjust’. ‘Speech at Aklacha’, April 1918, \textit{CWMG}, vol. 14, p.323. Although the gains at Kheda were insubstantial, the people acquired a spirit of fearlessness and a consciousness of their strength to employ satyagraha whenever necessary.

\textsuperscript{57} Of one such arrival after a long train journey, \textit{The Hindu} reported his condition as: Mr. Gandhi looked thin and emaciated, a loose shirt soiled by four days of continuous travel covered his body and a pair of trousers similar in appearance covered his legs. \textit{The Hindu}, April 17 1915, \textit{CWMG}, vol. 13: 47.


based clothing industry. India's indigenous cloth industry 'was made to die'. The Company's persecution was so cruel that Indian craftsmen were 'obliged to cut off their own thumbs in order to avoid imprisonment'.

Despite consistent campaign in its favour, Gandhi's Khadi accredited an identity of being a commodity of exceptional times. Whenever national political temperature soared Khadi's sales surged. During these momentous political occasions, Khadi was bought and worn with gay abandon. The sentiments of buyer subordinated sense and sensibilities. In other times its stock piled up and compliant against its doubtful durability, dearness, and lack of variety became considerable. In order to bring consistency in its commerce Gandhi created an agency to cater to production, propaganda, and philanthropy. It was All India Spinners' Association (AISA); an association not of but for the poorest. Whatever its political ambitions, AISA primarily fashioned itself as an economic enterprise catering to the poorest. By offering to engage poor and idle people in a productive avenue its aim was to provide an opportunity for earning a minimum subsistence wage. Need to provide subsistence wages to 'living skeletons' weighed heavily upon its organizational objectives.

This chapter's focus is on the agency of All India Spinners' Association (AISA) that the Swadeshi proponents established in order to undertake systematic propaganda, production, and sales of Khadi. AISA was established in September 1925 at Patna by a resolution of All India Congress Committee (AICC). It was conceived as an organization 'unaffected and uncontrolled by politics, by political changes or political bodies'. Though a Congress sponsored organization, it had an 'independent existence and powers', and an independent constitution.

26 Who Cut The Thumbs?, *YI*, (CWMG vol.19: 487)
27 AICC sanctioned AISA to take over all the assets and concerns of AIKB and the provincial Khadi Boards.
28 The resolution of the AICC that gave birth to AISA read the following: ‘Whereas the time has arrived for the establishment of an expert organization for the development of hand-spinning and khaddar, and whereas experience has shown that such development is not possible without a permanent organization, unaffected and uncontrolled by politics, by political changes or political bodies, an organization called the All-India Spinners' Association is hereby established with the consent of the All-India Congress Committee, as an integral part of the Congress organization, but with independent existence and powers. Khadi Guide, 1927, Published by: All India Spinners' Association, Ahmedabad, p12.
The year 1925 was Gandhi's year of Congress presidency. It was also a year when his determined bid to establish a Khadi more in the Congress culture and hierarchy was met with equally determined resistance from the established Congress old-guard. This was a year of revenge of old politics that had been simmering not just since the Bardoli resolution and his imprisonment, a month after. 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 struck with vengeance. At Patna, a disillusioned Gandhi proposed formation of All India Spinners' Association within the aegis of and yet unfettered by encumbrances from Congress. Ironically, its formation marked the beginning of the end of Gandhi's political influences.

AISA held its first trustee meet at Patna on 25 September 1925, immediately after it was accorded an organizational status by the AICC. Besides Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Shankerlal Banker, Jamnalal Bajaj, Satishchandra Dasgupta, Maganlal Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad attended the inaugural trustees' meet. Its Governing Council included people who were close to Gandhi. Its only Muslim face was the 'big brother' Maulana Shakaut Ali. Gandhi was candid about his appointment as a member of the AISA Council. His sole qualification, Gandhi said, was Maulana

29 It is an important aspect of the national movement that is yet to see the light of the day. For detail see chapter four.
30 Gandhi was released from the prison in early 1924 on account of his illness, which kept him incapacitated for the whole of 1924, though not away from the political controversy borne out of Swarajist campaign for Council programme. It was only in 1925, as a Congress President, he took to national tours. Politically, though his position was indisputable, his acumen and sagacity were much doubted among his colleagues after the unilateral decision to suspend civil-disobedience through Bardoli resolution of 1922.
31 It would eventually be a decade before Gandhi resigned his primary membership of Congress in 1934, though signs of the same were unmistakably evident even in 1924. Between 1924 and 1940, Gandhi devoted himself mostly to the social, economic, and spiritual regeneration of the country, which he came to believe would be achieved not by Constitutional concessions and reforms, political debates and resolutions, but by the efforts of the people themselves.
32 Details of AISA’s functioning is recorded in the minutes of its Trustees Meet; preserved in micro­films at Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.
33 He was AISA’s Technical Director.
34 Prasad served as Legal advisor to AISA besides his job of AISA agent in Bihar.
being a Musalman. His being a Muslim was also the factor for his eventual resignation from the Council when their relationship soured owing to differences over the communal riots.

In the beginning of its career, AISA’s Council had equal representation from both political as well as constructive work streams of the National Congress. In December 1928, after Maganlal Gandhi’s untimely demise, AISA’s reconstituted Council comprised of 12 members. If members such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and Rajagopalachari could be said to belong to the political stream, there were Jamnalal Bajaj, Gangadhar Deshpande, Satish Chandra Dasgupta, Shankerla Banker, Manilal Kothari, and Konda Venkatappayya who were diehard constructive workers and fairly apolitical.

AISA’s executive positions were safely in the hands of Gandhi’s constructive workers. Even while Gandhi, striding across the divide, was the President, Bajaj, till his death in 1940, held treasurer’s position, and Banker, again till 1940, of executive Secretary. All these members, whether political or distantly apolitical, were those who belonged to Gandhi’s loyal inner circle. Yet, it would be erroneous to assume absence of friction between factions. There are recorded instances of ruffled egos.

---

35 Gandhi often referred to Muslims lukewarm attitude towards Khadi. Writing in 1924, he said: 'I have not known many Muslim organizations devoted specially to khadi work. Nor are many Muslims found to take a lively interest in this much-needed national work. Indeed, during the Bakr-Id in Ahmedabad, a friend tells me, Mussalmans could be counted on the fingers of one hand who were dressed in khadi. They were not even dressed in Indian mill-cloth. It was all foreign.' 'A Muslim Khadi Committee', Young India, CWMG vol.24: 480.

36 'Letter to Shaukat Ali', November 30 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 132). Kohat’s mutual massacre, that they together investigated but came to tangential conclusion brought end to their comradeship.

37 Gandhi became AISA’s founding President for the first five years although his travel-born health problems repeatedly incapacitated him from attending to its routine work. In Gandhi’s absence (due to illness), it was Bajaj who was AISA’s officiating President. Even when Bajaj was a textile magnate who supported Gandhi’s cause and was treasurer of the AISA, the Council of AISA sanctioned a sum of rupees fifty per month for his office at Bombay.

38 Shankerla Banker was one of the first convert of Gandhi. Earlier he worked in close proximity with Annie Besant. He was a son of a professional Banker. He wrote an autobiographical chronicle that is a good source book on Khadi work. (Gandhiji aur rashtriya pravartiyan, Serva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajaghat, Varanasi, 1969) An AISA colleague wrote: 'Banker...burnt out his youth in the service of the Charkha.' S. Ramanathan, Gandhi and the Youth, p27

39 After that, Krishandas Jajoo became its Secretary.

40 Many of the elected District Boards controlled by Parties cooperated with AISA in promoting Khadi movement but some did play truant under misplaced notion of loyalty. A school-teacher of Arcot was dismissed from employment by North Arcot Board on the pretext that he was collecting subscription for Khadi Fund from students. Similar dismissal also took in Moradabad.
between Nehru and Kumarappa, the executive President of Gandhi's another outfit, the All India Village Industries Association.\textsuperscript{41} As the freedom's dateline neared, the political participation in the Council fell. Patel and Prasad both resigned from the Council in October 1946. In the circumstances, an advisory body was proposed but soon the idea was abandoned.

AISA's Council meeting was held with religious regularity and even the political upheavals rarely intervened to obstruct its frequency.\textsuperscript{42} Considering the frequency of AISA council meet, which was always held under Gandhi's eager eyes, and also considering the fact that some of the provincial agents of AISA were the active leaders of Congress too, it appears that Gandhi had succeeded in harnessing Congress' manpower, energy, and resources to Khadi cause. Yet, the quorum required for the council meet was mere four; Maganlal, Bajaj, Banker, and Gandhi were regulars till Maganlal's death in 1928. All the four held important positions in the central command structure of AISA. In December 1928, AISA began to enroll life

\textsuperscript{41} In Nehru supported Planning Committee, Gandhi's representative J C Kumarappa, the Secretary of All India Village Industries Association, was humiliated and ousted. ('Development Planning and the Indian State', Partha Chatterjee in Politics and the State in India edited by Zoya Hasan, Sage, 2000, pp115-141.) Nehru even went so far as to claim that Kumarappa was a 'worthless man' ('Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', January 5 1940, CWMG vol.71, 77). To which Gandhi reacted sharply and asked Nehru for an explanation. In his letter dated January 3, 1940, Nehru wrote to Gandhi, shielding his planning committee members who, according to him, had approached Kumarappa 'for certain information in regard to cottage industries and sought his co-operation on some other matters connected therewith. Kumarappa refuse(d) any kind of co-operation or help.' Gandhi in his January 5, 1940 letter wrote to Nehru that his assessment of Kumarappa was on the 'flimsiest testimony'. 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', January 5 1940, CWMG vol.71, 77. Gandhi termed it 'ignorant or interested criticism' which did not influence him. 'Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru', after January 5 1940, CWMG vol.71, 78

\textsuperscript{42} AISA's career spanned close to twenty-five years (1925-1953). Till 1941, AISA Council met for about fifty times. The Quit India movement interrupted it.
members in its central council. Some insinuated that it was under compulsion due to the paucity of qualified candidates.

AISA members' prime duty was to campaign for hand-spinning and Khadi. A member was expected to socialize and invite people to adopt Khadi, spin regularly, and enroll new members. If necessary, a member was also expected to hawk Khadi. But more than his work in the social sphere it was in personal realm that he was primarily held responsible. The individual AISA member was expected to adhere scrupulously to spinning routine and habitually wear Khadi. There were two categories of AISA members. The A-class members were those who habitually wore Khadi and paid a monthly subscription of one thousand yards of well twisted and uniform self-spun yarn. The B-class members were those who habitually wore Khadi and paid an annual subscription of 2000 yards of self-spun yarn. In enrolling members for AISA no especial effort was made. It was thought that those who believed in the cause of Khadi would scarcely required enticement to enroll through propaganda. AISA's membership-roll remained insubstantial. Even those who had joined in the first flush of enthusiasm withdrew soon after. In April 1929, AISA took a decision to abolish its B-class membership. Finally, in 1945, even the A-class

---

43 'Khaddar in a sense is purely an economic proposition. A khaddar organization must be a business concern before everything else. The democratic principle, therefore, cannot apply to it. Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas. There can be no room for such conflict within a business organization. Imagine parties, groups and the like in a business concern. But a khadi organization is more than a business concern. It is a philanthropic institution. Such an institution cannot be governed by popular fancy.' Interview to Khadi Workers, On or before August 24 1934, Harijan, September 21 1934, CWMG vol.58: 353-5.

44 Each member was required to submit a specific amount of self-spun yarn on a monthly basis. In 1931, S Ramanathan, a former worker of AISA, published a polemic on Khadi. In it he wrote: The All India Spinners' Association was constituted on a spinning franchise and today its voters can be counted on the fingers' ends. To avoid a break down of the constitution they have made the executive to consist of life members. Shortly, I expect they will make the offices hereditary' (The Superstition of Khadi: A discussion, S Ramanathan, Pattabhi Sitharamiya, N S Varadachari, The Kudi Arasu Publishing House, Erode, 1931, p11).

45 Notes: Spinners' Difficulties, YI, December 3 1925, (CWMG vol.29, 296)

46 Ibid.

47 However the real reason was Gandhi's failure in attracting people to adhere to Spinning Franchise as a necessary qualification for Congress membership. Spinning Franchise was introduced by Gandhi in the wake of his Presidency of Congress. Congress members not only played truant in adhering to the letter and spirit of the constitutional requirement of spinning franchise but they also protested by withdrawing from Congress membership. The aggregate Congress membership in the wake of spinning franchise fell to minimal. The clause of spinning franchise was rescinded and old qualification requirement of four-anna payment was re-introduced by the end of Gandhi's term.
membership was abolished. It was dictated by the situation in which members were failing in the observance of the discipline of the membership. In 1926, a category for the children of age below 18 was introduced. But three years later in 1929 this category too was abolished. The limited membership somehow restricted the organization’s desire to adopt democratic administration.

Till 30th November 1925, the Association had 2144 members under 'A' category, 140 under 'B' category and 17 Associate members. As would be evident from the following table, in later phase AISA membership was confined only to its paid-workers. The following table indicates the membership in the various categories from 1926-42.

Table 1 [Figures showing membership details from 1926 to 1942]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>'A' Category</th>
<th>'B' Category</th>
<th>Children Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>3472</td>
<td>942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1411</td>
<td>In this year, both these categories were removed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>655</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>2531</td>
<td>Out of this 2274 were AISA workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>3558</td>
<td>Out of this 2939 were AISA workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2914</td>
<td>Out of this 2417 were AISA workers and workers of Certified organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Owing to political upheaval there were very few members and information is lacking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 AISA took a decision to allow juveniles below eighteen years to gain membership of the organization by furnishing 1000 yards of self-spun yarn every month. The idea was to cultivate regularity among children, train their eyes and fingers, and enable them to understand the 'moral bond' between them and their poor brethren. 'Notes: For Juveniles', YI, March 4 1926, CWMG vol.30, 68.

49 All India Spinners' Association, YI, November 15 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 50) also, All India Spinners' Association, YI, December 27 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 276)

50 Source: Charkha Sangh ka Itihaas, p.150
AISA was headquartered at Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram. Its Council alone was empowered to amend its constitution. A number of amendments were introduced in its career beginning from 1925. In its second trustee meet, held on 11 November 1925, at Sabarmati Ashram, a sub-committee was appointed to frame rules and instructions for organizing work in the provinces, for the encouragement of voluntary spinning, and for enlistment of members. In its formative years, the majority of council deliberations apparently were on the applications for the establishment of sale and production units that came from all over the country. AISA council devised certain guiding principles to enable its secretarial staff to entertain and sanction the loan applications.

Most of the trustee meet minutes chronicle the loan sanctioned and disbursement made to various applicants from across the country. Although, AISA itself was not a legally registered body, only such institutions were entitled to receive loans from it. It was the central governing council of AISA that sanctioned opening of sales-stores or production-units. The Council deliberated on the financial viability of each venture. A proper inquiry of the work-plan, ‘documents, titles and values’, and its ‘technical and business’ viability was made before the loan was sanctioned. AISA sent its own trusted lieutenants to evaluate the viability of application, possibilities in a province, fund-requirement, etc before sanctioning the production unit or sales

---

51 It was at Sabarmati Ashram that all yarn towards the fulfillment of both Congress and Association membership was sent. After Maganlal’s death in 1928, Sabarmati Ashram was dedicated totally to the Khadi work. The realization of limitation of Ashram and its inmates’ capacity to uphold the lofty foundational objectives made Gandhi change the name of Satyagraha Ashram to Udyog Mandir. It was in recognition of greatness of the idea and recurring lapses in its implementation that the humbler name was thought of and ascribed to. The changed name more honestly conveyed the vocation of the Ashram that was founded with lofty aims of making national worker. It was thought that whereas Ashram’s inward journey was limited by the potential of ever-growing inmates, its outward manifestation was visible in its industry and physical work. Hence, the name Udyog Mandir more suited to its vocation. ‘Satyagraha Ashram’, Navajivan, November 4 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 23), also, ‘Handicap of Mahatmaship’, YJ, November 8 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 33)

52 Rules were deliberated, formulated and adopted in its second council meeting that was held in November 1925 at Ahmedabad. Its Board in its second meeting decided on following principles:
   a) Loans were to be sanctioned only where spinning was to be developed among people on the verge of starvation.
   b) Those individuals who made themselves personally liable or legally registered institutions were entitled to receive loans.
   c) Loan was not exceeding the value of asset held by the applicant. 1% interest rate was charged on loan amount sanctioned.
   d) A proper inquiry of the work-plan, ‘documents, titles and values’, its ‘technical and business’ potential was made before the loan was sanctioned.
depot. For instance, in 1926, Rajendra Prasad, an AISA agent for Bihar, was sent to Assam to investigate its potential and recommend its claim to Council.

Trustees usually set individual targets of production and sales for various units. They ordered, as the occasions arose, investigations of work done under the sanctioned money. They deliberated over the appointment of the provincial offices, financial position of Associates, and financial statements received from the provincial departments. The organization's provincial presence was through the agents appointed by its Council. Provincial agents and secretaries were significant in the spread of the AISA network. The names of the Provincial Agents and Secretaries in 1927 are given in Table II. Later there were changes but the table gives an indication of the kind of people who were with the AISA.

Table II:

The names of Agents and Secretaries of Provincial AISA branches in 1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra</td>
<td>Rajendra Prasad</td>
<td>Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behar</td>
<td>Hemaprova Devi</td>
<td>Laxminarayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>Nanalal Kalidas</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Gangadharrao B. Deshpande</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Dr. Gopichand Bhargava</td>
<td>Kishanchand Bhatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>Jamnalal Bajaj</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S. Ramanathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru</td>
<td>Sitla Sahai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utkal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Niranjan Patnaik</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On account of its being a legally non-registered body, AISA experienced many an instance of default from the fledgling units. The defaulting units claimed that AISA being a legally non-registered body was not in position to approach the court of law for redress against the financial irregularity. Facing many such cases of default and forgery, AISA on 8th November 1937 got itself registered under government's Society Registration Act XXI, 1860. It is not that the nationalists were innocent of

53 These provincial agents were Gandhi's closest followers. They equally took part in deliberations in Council.

54 Source: Khadi Guide, 1927
legal requirement. Bajaj had registered an organization called Gandhi Sewa Sangh under the same act in the year 1923. It was just that they had a larger ambition and an overarching design for an autonomous alternative that shunned governmental patronage or recognition.

AISA saw unlimited expansion potential but its effort were marred by its inability to attract suitably endowed candidates into its service. It was difficult to get trained and enthusiastic workers as well as financial assistance. It was not the scarcity of funds but lack of workers, lack of efficiency, and lack of faith that hindered the growth of Khadi. Gandhi was in favour of persuading the consumers to also become producers by spinning of simplest of implements such as dhanush takli. Gandhi thought there was dearth ‘more of men than of money’. Investing money was no hindrance but finding suitable men was always a challenge. An AISA worker was required to be adept in science of spinning and other auxiliary processes involved in cloth-making, and also possessed moral certitude. But it is not enough for us merely acquire knowledge of this science. We need character in addition to this knowledge.

In early phase of the movement, salesmanship in a worker was a valuable trait. The science of spinning included ability to differentiate cotton varieties and expertise in the methods of picking, ginning, carding, and spinning cotton. Knowledge of various instruments that were used at every stage of processing the raw cotton into a cloth was an additional qualification. Recruitment of such workers was evidently

55 It was a body formed in the immediate aftermath of Gandhi's arrest in March 1923 to help support Gandhi's cause of non-cooperation as well as those of political activists who believed in Gandhi's philosophy of action. The organization was to offer support to the families of the activists. For the purpose, Bajaj had given an initial contribution of two lacs.

56 Advice to Khadi workers, Bardoli, Before January 9 1942, (CWMG vol.75, 208)

57 Speech at Tamil Union, Colombo, November 22 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 299)

58 The commandments were: Lead a pure and chaste life; Know laws of health and sanitation; Find happiness in a simple and frugal life. Only public workers of exceptional purity of character could awaken the Indian villager into activity. Gandhi could not 'appreciate, much less adopt', the view that the 'character of a public worker ... is his own private concern' (CWMG vol.64, 11).

59 'You have come here not for earning your livelihood but with a desire to serve, to dedicate your life to the cause of khadi, and for this character will be very essential.' Speech to Trainees at Khadi Vidyalaya, Before April 13 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 221-4)

60 Production of Khadi includes cotton-growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and the woof, weaving, and washing.

61 In the organization of AISA smallest details were as important as the campaign. The organization was to take root in the village and reach up to the national body. The logistics of Khadi work were
hard as AISA was periodically forced to put advertisements in disguise through the writings of Gandhi proclaiming ‘Wanted Workers’. AISA’s predecessor too had found it difficult to recruit qualified workforce.

In recognition of its difficulties in recruiting suitable workers and enrolling qualified voluntary members, AISA council in its 8th meeting, held in December 1926, resolved to establish a Khadi Service. It was also called Khadi Sewa Sangh and was instituted as AISA’s answer to government’s bureaucracy. It was the beginning of building a dedicated cadre in the service of Khadi. An elaborate recruiting and training process was laid down for the potential recruits. The tutoring was for the minimum of two years. There were also other shorter duration courses for limited purposes. Only those could be the members of the Khadi Service who had received a certificate of competency from the Board of Studies, instituted by AISA for the purpose. Maganlal Gandhi was the Secretary of the Board. Selected candidates from among the applicants were first admitted as probationer at a working center for three months. Later, they were sent for a two-year course of instruction in AISA’s Khadi Vidyalaya at Sabarmati. The course of instruction included all the processes leading from growing cotton to Khadi. The candidates were also to learn the method of bookkeeping and account management. Upon receiving a certificate of competency the varied and began with the maintenance of an inventory of spinning wheels. The science also included knowledge of different instruments required at each stage. A key to being successful Khadi organizer was to possess skill and love in equal measures. He possessed an expertise in all the processes leading to Khadi. He also knew management enough to draw maximum output from craftsmen. Letter to Kantilal, July 9 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 114)

62 Wanted Workers, YI, March 10 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 152)

63 In July 1921, with a resolution eliciting general information on Khadi works, the Congress began its association with Khadi. In January 1924, an All India Khadi Board was established. It was sanctioned by the AICC held at Cocanada. In June 1924 Gandhi wrote: ‘I understand that the Khadi Board which is employing a large number of young men for the khadi work is finding it difficult to get the right kind of men to give their whole time to the work.’ Those who were ready to volunteer for such work showed reluctance to accept payment for such work. ‘False Pride?’, Young India, CWMG vol. 24: 361.

64 An Appeal to the Nation, YI, July 17 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 394-8)

65 The idea of the Khadi Seva Sangh was mine. I felt that just as the Government has an organization, its naukarshahi, it would be good for us also to have an organization of workers. The Government’s naukarshahi is called ‘shahi’ because its members, although they are servants, function as rulers. But we are not ‘shahi’ because we have to do real service. For admission to this organization a course of fixed period was prescribed because in order to be a khadi worker training and proficiency are required. Speech to Trainees at Khadi Vidyalaya, Before April 13 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 221-4)

66 Khadi Service, YI, September 16 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 416)
candidate was sent to a provincial Khadi Karyalaya to gain practical experience for a month. AISA’s Technical Department which ran Khadi Vidyalaya gave a certificate of eligibility. It was then that a candidate was recruited in Khadi Service. Recruitment was done after signing a contract that bound a candidate to at least three years of uninterrupted service to the AISA.

A candidate was to receive a monthly remuneration of rupees thirty which was raised to a maximum of fifty in a three year period. Head of the province could terminate services of a candidate upon furnishing a satisfactory cause. Every applicant who successfully entered the portals of Khadi Service deposited return fare to original address of residence in addition to rupees three for the purpose of return arrangement in the event of his or her being discharged. The council of the AISA was final appellate authority for redress of any grievances.

Transparency was very visible aspect to its endeavour. Since its foundation in 1925, the AISA published its annual report containing detailed analysis of the income and expenditure of the Association and its associate agencies. In 1929, it began a provident fund scheme for its workers. AISA conducted a census of all its workers. Because of high cost in recruiting educated workers, AISA in its later phase put

---

67 The first budget sanctioned by AISA for its technical department that undertook research and development of processes leading to production of Khadi was Rs. 950/-. Within a year, technical department’s annual entitlement had more than doubled. For the year 1926-7, its budget was fixed at rupees twenty-two thousand. Maganlal Gandhi was its leading light and after his death in 1928, Narandas Gandhi took over its management.

68 'Annual Report of the AISA', VI, April 5 1928, (CWMG vol.36: 186)

69 AISA workforce held a male-upper-caste bias. In Tamil Nadu where Brahmin-non-Brahmin struggle was on the forefront, AISA faced the accusation that Khadi network was under the control of Brahmins. Even while there was a predominance of Brahmins in Khadi organization, the large majority of spinners and weavers who were supported out of the movement-network were decidedly non-Brahmins. Gandhi asserted that it was not due to the Brahmin bias in the movement but lack of suitable and skilled non-Brahmin workers that made AISA recruit only Brahmins. 'Speech at Public Meeting', Tinnevelly, October 7 1927, (CWMG vol.35: 94) In 1925 too the AIKB, the AISA’s predecessor attempted to conduct a census of all the khadi workers. 'The Secretary, A.I.K.B., had circularized all the provinces to send a list of their khaddar workers with particulars about their qualifications, work and remuneration.' Although, data was incomplete, yet it was formidable given the early days of Khadi organization. The total number of paid workers are 148, receiving an aggregate allowance of Rs. 3,469, i.e., an average allowance of Rs. 23 per head. The number of honorary workers is 58; though the educational qualifications in some cases have not been shown, the lists show no less than 16 graduates and three lawyers and a number of undergraduates. The maximum allowance received does not exceed Rs. 65 per mensem, and the minimum is as low as Rs. 2. Almost all the workers are full-time workers, and three of the honorary full-time workers are ladies. 128 khaddar centres are mentioned.' 'Notes: Khaddar Workers’ Census', Young India, August 13 1925.
greater emphasis on the recruitment of workers from rural background. If the policy of self-sufficing Khadi was to gain wide acceptance, AISA required a large number of workers. Recruiting English educated workers entailed high cost that was beyond the capacity of AISA. Gandhi considered formation of Union within AISA’s productive units as ‘fallacy’. 70 Gandhi viewed such a union of workers as not just against a philanthropic organization but also against the artisans, ‘half-starved half-employed persons, mostly women’. Any worker-related grievances could be sorted by central body ‘surely not through unions after the orthodox style’. Workers were ‘part creators and part trustees’ and therefore equally responsible for the well being of the Association.

Since 1933, Mahrashtra Khadi Patrika registered the progress of Khadi in Maharashtra on a monthly regularity. It contained ‘an unvarnished and faithful’ account of Khadi progress. 71 AISA launched a detailed data collection drive too. 72 The systematic survey of work was possible due to the voluntary discipline AISA demanded from its subordinate organizations. 73 As to keep in regular touch with customers AISA proposed each centre to maintain a register of customers with their full names and addresses. 74 Even while the customer base was erratic in its loyalty to Khadi, such a data-base could prove useful. In these nebulous days of direct marketing, it was not very clear how such a data base could help in the growth of Khadi sales. Every production centre was instructed to maintain a spinners’ register

70 'A Fallacy', Harijan, July 16 1938, (CWMG vol.67: 176)
72 There were the periodical publications of Khadi bulletins giving all kinds of useful information to Khadi workers. It was part of the pioneer work done by the late Maganlal Gandhi who built up the science of Khadi. A copy of one of these bulletins called Dev Cotton published in 1923 showed how attempts were being made even in the early stages of the movement to work out a scheme or self-sufficing Khadi.
73 The technical department of the A.I.S.A., reports to me that all the khadi depots have not furnished it with the particulars required with their samples, and some have not even sent their samples. Khadi depots should realize that these particulars are required as much for their benefit as for that of the khadi movement in general. It is impossible for the technical department to make generalizations, draw deductions, and guide khadi producers, unless it is assisted in its research work by the various khadi depots and other workers. Nor is it possible to evolve discipline unless there is quick response made to the head office by all subordinate organizations, and it will be impossible to enable the All-India Spinners’ Association to realize its aim unless there is voluntary discipline evolved at all points of its activity. 'Khadi Samples', YI, October 13 1927, (CWMG vol.35: 126)
74 'Register of Customers', Harijanbandhu, May 23 1937, (CWMG vol.65: 235)
giving the names and address of the spinners with information about quantity of yarn and wages earned by each spinner. Each of the production center was asked to provide information on and sample of its produced clothes. These particulars were used for the technical department to make generalizations, draw deductions, and guide Khadi producers. Each piece of four square yards was to be tagged with a ticket bearing the following particulars:

1. Width in inches;
2. Length of piece in yards;
3. Number of strands in warp per inch, and count of yarn used for warp and number of strands in weft per inch;
4. Weight in tolas per square yard;
5. Cost price per yard; and
6. Sale price per yard.

India’s voluntary network has been afflicted with this debate on recruitment of workers. Whether one searched for workers with the service spirit or their service was availed with the high salary is a question of debate that remains alive to this day. As the voluntary work turns into the domain of professionalism there is a need to probe assumptions beneath the bipolarity of spirit or salary. Richard Gregg, an American contemporary who wrote many a book on Gandhian economics, advocated the cause of higher salary and trained professionals. Gandhi though not disputing the proposition showed his financial constraints to pay high wages to the workers. But more than the pecuniary constraints, Gandhi certainly had some practical enmity with the proposition. He would not adopt the business strategies of the mainstream commercialism. It was mostly to do with the problem of retaining highly paid workers who had joined for pecuniary gain than attracted by the spirit of work. 75 Such paid workers besides being upwardly mobile were also thought to be unwieldy about the obedience quotient. Gandhi’s arguments betrayed his lack of trust in the educated, skilled labour. He recruited them only if they also showed an imbibed spirit. Salary was secondary. What was primary was the inculcated spirit of the movement. An imbibed spirit moved one to sacrifice comfort and not demand salary: it was this

75 Because of high cost in recruiting educated workers Gandhi advised his AISA organizers to recruit workers from the village background. If the policy of self-sufficing Khadi had to become widespread, AISA would have required a manifold of workers. Recruiting English educated workers would have entailed high cost which would have been beyond capacity of AISA.
premise over which qualification of workers was weighed. The Khadi enterprise, as it was conceived then, was never in position to give the enticing pay-perks to its workers. It was a movement which required a fair measure of continuous sacrifice from those who had become accustomed to the city life. The class of workers required for the movement were trained and brought up for the specific work of AISA. No prior acquired skill was the benchmark. Every one had to undergo the grind of minimalist existence. Such workers could not be availed through advertising either.

**Table III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers of workers</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.25/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.30/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>1145</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.20/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.20/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1134</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.26/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>Average monthly wage Rs.21/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>871</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1633</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>2221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>2732</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>2188 of these received a monthly payment of Rs.19/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1122 of these received Rs.20-50/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>122 of these received Rs.50/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>2438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>2341</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>2136</td>
<td>394 of these received Rs.15/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1170 of these received Rs.15-30/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>408 of these received Rs.30-50/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>142 of these received Rs.50-75/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 of these received more than Rs.75/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1941, Gandhi asserted: 'AISA is the largest institution of its kind in India and perhaps in the world. If the expectations formed about this institution materialize,

76 'What I want to state is this: the movement is bound to fail if we expect to succeed by adopting the same methods, or very nearly the same methods with necessary adaptations, as the adversary, if such a term can be properly used under a plan of life which admits of no enemies. In my opinion, we have to devise other ways of making the movement a living and universal force at least so far as India is concerned. The adversary believes in the latest appliances and therefore is bound to adopt the methods of those who are adepts in using those appliances; but in the spinning movement, modern appliances are largely discarded and the few that are retained are used in a different way. The spinning movement, so far as I can see, will never afford the high wages that are demanded by good men in such a line of business.' 'Letter to R B Gregg', May 27 1927, (CWMG vol.33: 376-80)

77 Source: Charkha Sangh ka Ithihaas, p.169
the AISA should represent the whole of dumb and semi-starved millions of India. It was the peak-year of its activities when it had some 3400 workers on its roll. In 1926, the AISA had on its record 110 cadres, 42,959 spinners and 3,407 weavers among whom were distributed over 9 lakh of rupees at the lowest computation. This distributing work was done at 150 production centers catering to the needs of some 1,500 villages. In 1941, *Khadi Jagat*, published a record of AISA's engagements. According to it, the AISA's work directly affected some 2,75,146 villagers, including 19,654 Harijans and 57,378 Muslims, scattered in at least 13,451 villages; a sum of Rs. 34,85,609 was distributed among them for their work as spinners, weavers, etc., in 1940. The spinners were largely women. But soon after, decline set in. Political repression played its role. But its expansion too had reached a plateau. The AISA had stiffened into an establishment. Its 56th Council meet held in October 1946 proposed transference of Khadi work to the people and the AISA limiting its function to the general auditing. In 1953, after initial dithering, AISA merged itself with the larger Gandhian umbrella organization called *Serva Sewa Sangh*. With that came an end to its career of philanthropic commerce. With the government appropriating its agenda it was soon reduced to a departmental status with in the vast governmental hierarchy.

For all the fund raising drive Gandhi was the main person. Gandhi was its AISA's roving brand-ambassador and fund-raiser. Gandhi hitched the collection drive under the aegis of All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund to Khadi work. There were pronounced skepticism among the contributors of Khadi Fund about the money being collected. Earlier, the Khilafat Funds, which was collected during the agitation, got evaporated as it was said that the banker with whom the funds were placed failed. Though Gandhi had nothing to do with the disbursement of Khilafat Fund, the upkeep of the Khadi Fund was under his responsibility. A Council of the All-India Spinners' Association became one of the pillars of AISA in its later-phase and was also appointed as President after Gandhi's death. The idea that every village craftsman should get one anna for an hour's honest labour, made by Gandhi four years earlier, was attempted to be given a practical shape by Dhirendra Majumdar. He authored a scheme which involved social as well as economic reform, visualized an immediate beginning in a small area and its gradual extension in ten years. 'How to Pay the eight anna wage?', *Khadi Jagat*, November 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 104)

---

78 'Khadi Jagat', inaugural number of Hindi journal Khadi Jagat, July 25 1941, (CWMG vol. 74: 59-60) After the suspension of trilingual journals of Harijan, Gandhi supported Khadi Jagat, a journal launched in July 1941. In this, Gandhi, articulated his belief through Khadi.

79 'All India Spinners' Association', *Young India*, December 23 1926, (CWMG vol.32: 449)

80 'An Error', *Khadi Jagat*, October 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 46)

81 Dhirendra Majumdar became one of the pillars of AISA in its later-phase and was also appointed as President after Gandhi’s death. The idea that every village craftsman should get one anna for an hour’s honest labour, made by Gandhi four years earlier, was attempted to be given a practical shape by Dhirendra Majumdar. He authored a scheme which involved social as well as economic reform, visualized an immediate beginning in a small area and its gradual extension in ten years. 'How to Pay the eight anna wage?', *Khadi Jagat*, November 1941, (CWMG vol.75, 104)
Association was entrusted with these Funds and their management. Seth Jarnmalal Bajaj, a cotton merchant of long standing, was treasurer of the Association. Shankerlal Banker, himself a son of a Banker, was the Secretary. The moneys were kept in well-known banks and audited intermittently.  

In December 1926, Mahadev Desai, Gandhi’s secretary, was holding a takli demonstration among a group of youth in Ahmedabad. After a while, the youth, bored by Mahadev’s finger movements, shouted down his speech and disrupted his meeting. Gandhi was aghast. He wrote a scathing note in Navjivan against the behaviour. ‘Showing repugnance against the takli is like marching an army against an ant...Those who belittle the takli belittle the poor.’ Gandhi saw in takli an appliance that was equivalent to plough.  

If the spinning-wheel is the king, Gandhi said, the takli is the queen. If the spinning-wheel is for thousands, the takli is for millions.

Takli was a new discovery that made spinning easier for those who constantly traveled. It was a kind of rosary that one could always ply. It was through this

---

82 'I do not know what happened to the Khilafat Funds, except that the banker with whom the funds were placed failed. But I may state that I never had anything to do with the management of the Khilafat Fund. For the Khadi Funds, I am certainly responsible. There is a Council of the All-India Spinners’ Association which is entrusted with these Funds and their management. Seth Jarnmalal Bajaj who is a very well-known merchant of long standing and a director of several important concerns is the treasurer of the Association. Sjt. Shankerlal Banker who is the son of late Ghelabhai Banker of the Bank of Bombay is the Secretary. The moneys are kept in well-known banks. Proper books of account are kept and they are audited by chartered accountants from time to time. The inspectors are appointed to inspect the accounts of subordinate organizations. Everything that is humanly possible to safeguard the Funds and their proper distribution is being done.' 'Letter to Chengiah Chetty', July 26 1927, (CWMG vol.34, 236)

83 'Just as the plough is the means of producing food, so is the takli the means of producing cloth. Huge mills may arise out of the takli. A spinning mill means a mill containing talkis.' Culture, Navajivan, December 5 1926, (CWMG vol.32, 388)

84 'If the spinning-wheel is the king, the takli is the queen. Without a queen, a king is no king, and without the king the queen can do nothing. It should also be realized that without a queen the royal house cannot go on. If the spinning-wheel is for thousands, the takli is for millions. In the past people spun even the finest yarn on the takli. The takli which they used was made of bamboo. Even today the Brahmans in the Madras Presidency spin the very fine yarn required for the sacred thread on the takli. Making a spinning-wheel takes time, but a takli can be made anywhere. It does not get out of order and makes no noise. It is quite possible that the takli will one day win over the spinning-wheel.' 'Letter to Narandas Gandhi', November 27 1932, (CWMG vol.52, 85)

85 'In devising the takli man’s inventive genius reached a height that had not been reached before. The cunning of the fingers was put to the best possible use. But as the takli was confined to the artisans who were never educated, it fell into disuse. If we want to revive it today in all its glory, if we are to revive and reconstruct the village life, we must begin the education of children with the takli. Takli-yajna is a social and public yajna and the charkha has no place in it. Takli teaches us silent service. The millions can perform the yajna only through takli. The noise of the spinning-wheel is a distraction in the takli-yajna.' (CWMG vol. 67: 119)
implement that Gandhi thought of meeting the acute shortage of Charkha. While a
Charkha spun 300 yards per hour on an average, the takli was said to produce 70
yards. It was cheap, portable, easy to make and handle, and spun yarn half as fast as
an ordinary spinning-wheel. ‘A takli can be plied if you are unoccupied even for five
minutes.’ One could spin uniform and well-twisted yarn on it. It was traditionally used
for spinning their holy thread. \(^{86}\)

Spinning was compulsory in the national schools that were founded in the
wake of non-cooperation movement. Charkha was the center of curriculum in national
schools but teaching was not to churn out spinning professionals. Charkha was not
one of profession but an instrument of service. Charkha in national schools
curriculum was not on par with carpentry, clay modeling, etc. Charkha was a
‘science’ that gave educated Indians ‘knowledge of the means of ameliorating the
condition of the masses’. \(^{87}\) Gandhi called for all academic disciplines to be devoted to
increase acceptability of Charkha. He exhorted for its scientific study. ‘Do you know
that we have not a national institution where mechanical engineering is taught and
where good spindles are made?’, he informed the students of national school at
Khamgaon.

The quality, degree and depth of its acceptance in the national schools was not
uniform. Some schools were pronouncedly indifferent to the vocation. \(^{88}\) For
schoolboys and girls Gandhi favoured takli in place of charkha. Takli meant
practically no cost, no space, and no trouble of breakage of parts. The spinning
campaign had caught up in the schools, particularly those run by various
municipalities controlled by the nationalist parties. The success of spinning culture in
schools was dependent over the patronage and enthusiasm of the teachers. In
Ahmedabad, Anasuya Sarabhai, ran an experiment in takli spinning in schools. The
experiment was conducted in some 24 schools where some 1600 boys and girls learnt

\(^{86}\) ‘Need to for close-attention to detail’, Navajivan, July 27 1924, (CWMG vol.24, 453-4); also, ‘My
Notes: Utility of Takli’, Navajivan, August 17 1924, (CWMG vol.25, 5)

\(^{87}\) ‘Charkha is an instrument of service. In a national school therefore where the nation expects us to
train national servants, the scheme of studies will centre round the charkha. It is a science in itself
and it is a science which gives us knowledge of the means of ameliorating the condition of the
masses.’ Speech at national School’, Khamgaon, February 8 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 57)

\(^{88}\) ‘National Schools’, YI, January 27 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 18)
the art. In 34 municipal schools in Banaras all the teachers had received instruction in carding and spinning. On an average each school had some ten spinning wheels for its students to spin. Generally, such situation prevailed in all areas. It was to offset such situation that Gandhi advocated the application of takli in schools. AISA considered Takli as best suited in the school environment. Though its output was half the Charkha, the collective output was more as there was communal spinning. AISA published an authorized 80 page booklet Takli Teacher with illustrations and text prepared by Maganlal Gandhi and Richard Gregg.

As AISA received an overwhelming demand for spindles and taklis, Gandhi requested R D Tata to provide him a lakh of the same as donation to the cause. For good measure and in an evidence of what a consummate bania he was, Gandhi wrote to Tata giving him the algebra of his aid. He wrote: 'I may say that each spindle or takli costs us about two to two annas and six pies each. If, therefore, you give me lac for us it would amount to a donation of at least Rs. 12,500 and according to the advice at my disposal it will cost you nothing less than Rs.3,000 in all.' (It is important to note that whereas Gandhi was against the factory mass produce, he felt no compunction in asking Tata to produce a number of taklis and showing him how it shall cost a fraction as it would produce in mass in his factory.)

I believe that I have got the mind of a scientist. I endeavour always to look at all the sides of a question and I have sanity and courage to own my mistakes as soon as I detect them.

The science of Khadi was a serious affair. The knowledge of science of Khadi was made obligatory upon any worker working in an AISA or its affiliated

---

89 'The experiment that is being scientifically conducted in schools is the one in the 24 schools conducted under superintendence of Shrimati Anasuya Bai. These schools have an attendance of 1600 boys and girls. Spinning is all done by the takli. Though all the teachers of the schools know spinning on the takli they are obliged to spin as well as the children. A fixed time is set apart for spinning by them. And the yarn so spun is turned out into khadi which in many cases is used by the children themselves.' 'Letter to Kurur Nilakantan Nambudripad', July 15 1926, (CWMG vol. 31, 144)

90 '10 wheels per school cannot be expected to give much for the simple reason that they are too few to be shared by all the children every day. I would, therefore, commend to the Municipality the introduction of the takli and it will be found that the output can be easily trebled without any substantial increase in the expenses. There would be no repairs required and every rupee.' 'Spinning in Schools', YI, August 5 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 264)

91 Letter to R D Tata, March 27 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 188)

92 Letter to W Tudor Owen, March 2 1933, (CWMG vol.53, 441)
organization. It was a science in service of the people. Gandhi was against the pandering of 'fancies' of people for increasing its sales and acceptability. Instead, he desired diligent study of 'science of Khadi' to actualize its spread. Gandhi exhorted people to learn Khadi work scientifically. Such a scientific process involved learning all the operations from sowing of cotton in the fields to the manufacture of Khadi and mastering the processes involved in the latter, as also learning the ways and means of selling the Khadi produced. The spinning-wheel means all the

93 It required all round improvement in the processes leading to the production of Khadi.

94 'In reorganizing your khadi production, you should not forget that the science of khadi, in some respects, works on diametrically opposite lines to that of ordinary business. You know how Adam Smith in his Wealth of Nations, after laying down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed, went on to describe certain other things which constituted the "disturbing factor" and prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the 'human element'. Now, it is this 'human element' on which the entire economics of khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's "pure economic motive", constitutes the "disturbing factor" that has got to be overcome.' Interview to Khadi Workers', on or before August 24 1934, Harijan, September 21 1934, CWMG vol.58: 353-5.

95 'The problem of khadi can be solved only by a perfect study of the science of khadi. It cannot be solved by yielding to the fancies of people. Khadi has an important role in times of famine. But the inhabitants of a famine-stricken area should content themselves with the lowest payment. If there is any other occupation through which they can earn more, we should not put the spinning-wheel or the takli before them.

The money received for the purpose of self-sufficiency in cloth cannot be given to victims of famine. The State or the rich ought to buy up the khadi produced in famine areas. Till the rich identify themselves with the poor, khadi can have no place as a means of relief in times of famine. Apart from the rich, the other classes cannot consume the khadi produced during famine. The poor would be wearing the khadi produced by themselves and the middle classes would buy their requirements in the market. There has to be, therefore, extra demand for khadi produced during famine.' 'Letter to Ramji', October 5 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 134)

96 In 1941, at Wardha, a Khadi Vidyalaya, was inaugurated by Gandhi. He exhorted the students to undertake 'a scientific study of the Charkha and Khadi and make improvements by new inventions and serve the villagers.' (Speech at Inauguration of Khadi Vidyalaya, Wardha, August 1 1941, CWMG vol.74, 203) A khadi worker should have a scientific attitude that fostered the discoveries of Newton or Galileo. (A Difficult Problem, Khadi Jagat) Charkha was not a call of backwardness. Gandhi's thinking was scientific. 'Make your mind and intellect scientific, so that you students will always search for new things for the betterment of your country.' (Speech at Inauguration of Khadi Vidyalaya, Wardha, August 1 1941, CWMG vol.74, 203) He was not immune to claims being made on behalf of industrialism. Soviet experiments had certainly caught the attention of India's future leaders. As he wrote to Kumarappa, whose article, Public Costs of Centralized production, flogged a dead horse. 'What we have to combat is socialization of industrialism. They instance the Soviet exploits in proof of their proposition. You have to show, if you can, by working out figures that handicrafts are better than power-driven machinery products.' Letter to J C Kumarappa, August 12 1941, (CWMG vol.74, 233)

97 'All these things should be studied scientifically.' 'Letter to Harilal Gandhi', October 6 1934, (CWMG vol.59, 141)
processes through which cotton passes.\textsuperscript{98} He endeavoured to make science of Khadi as exact, and introduce as much art in it, as possible.\textsuperscript{99}

In a speech to trainees at Khadi Vidyalaya, Gandhi said Khadi was an empirical science. The science of Khadi was empirical because its experiments and conclusions were accessible to experience. Common people had direct experience of it and access to it. The Khadi science was empirical in the sense that it was not undertaken from the selfish motive of profit or with the objective of gaining knowledge. It was empirical because it carried out the actual result of its experiments in the field. 'We have to observe carefully how much cotton is obtained from a given quantity of raw cotton, how much yarn is prepared out of that cotton and how much cloth is woven out of that yarn. And in this way we can calculate how many people have to put in how much labour in order to meet the cloth requirements of the whole country.'\textsuperscript{100} Its laboratory was the field. And everyone involved in the cotton-cultivation or plying charkha was a scientist with endowed acumen. It therefore was a science that bridged the gap between experience and academics.

Each step in the process of Khadi making was based on science; hence a Science of Khadi. It was a science that drew not only from the experience of present generation but also called for the knowledge accumulated through the succeeding generations. It hankered back to tradition. Its inferences were always measured in the

\textsuperscript{98} 'My love for the spinning-wheel increases as I take more and more interest in it. The spinning-wheel means all the processes through which cotton passes. God is no doubt the sole help of the poor, but the spinning-wheel is His hands and feet, and, the poor man or woman who holds it holds God. We may not be able to live on simple fare as the poor do, but we ought to ply the spinning-wheel for their sake. And to ply the spinning-wheel means to examine its infinite capacity and reveal it to the world.' 'Letter to Durga Desai', January 18 1931, (CWMG vol. 45: 99)

\textsuperscript{99} 'The science of khadi is still in its infancy. It is a developing science. With every new discovery that I make in it, the realization comes to me all the more vividly how little I know of that science. There is no other country in the world, with the possible exception of China that is potentially as rich as India with its inexhaustible, untapped reserves of manpower. Tap these reserves, and you at once banish poverty from this country; and hand-spinning is the means by which this could be done. All that we have done so far in khadi was necessary. Without it we could not have reached the present stage. But we have yet only touched the fringe of the problem.' (CWMG vol. 58: 353-5)

\textsuperscript{100} The science of khadi is a serious affair; its scope is extremely vast, because through this science we want to serve the 33 crore people of India and through them the whole world. It is an empirical science; astronomy, on the contrary, is not an empirical science. The science of khadi is empirical because its experiments and conclusions are accessible to experience. Thirty-three crores of people can have direct experience of it. Speech to Trainees at Khadi Vidyalaya, Before April 13 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 221-4)
backdrop of accumulated traditional knowledge. But tradition was not the blind alley. Tradition was sought to be re-structured on the basis of new scientific knowledge. Earlier skill-based occupations had disintegrated owing to its over-dependence on the passage of knowledge through tradition. Carrying of a stream of knowledge merely on the strength of tradition did not lead to scientific growth. It was to be a systematic process of observation, analysis and new inferences drawn that enhanced the knowledge bequeathed by tradition. There is a great difference in merely knowing to do a thing and in knowing its why and wherefore. While former is mechanical latter is ever-generative knowledge.

This field-based science involved all the processes that the conventional laboratory based science boasted of. What the textile mills did in their laboratories, Khadi science did in every home. Testing the strength of cotton, cotton gathering etc was the first step of Khadi science. Khadi science was more complicated, more demanding, more prone to failure as a result of little carelessness. There was rarely any wastage. In ginning cotton, it was important that the cotton seeds retain their qualities as each step had multiple utility-values. The cotton seeds, after ginning and after having extracted oil from them were fed to cattle. These by-products were as important as ginned-cotton itself. In the case of mill-ginning same was not the case. The mill-ginning involved wastage of resources. It was because of these that Khadi science demanded a greater expertise and a fine-tuned sense of duty.

Contrary to textile mills whose efficiency was determined by profit motive, Khadi science had a national purpose. Khadi science was different from that applied at mills. It required cultivation of character in addition to expertise. Its cadres were not to work for livelihood alone but to undertake service. It was a community-based organization and therefore, character and expertise were of equal importance.

All science is site-specific. Science of Khadi was specific to India. 'A scientist can derive all the joy from his particular science, can go on making new discoveries and improving the science', Gandhi wrote asserting that science is all about enlightened enquiry. The science of Khadi asked for joyous engagement with all its processes leading to the fabric Khadi. Maganlal was such a scientist. He was engaged thinker; he 'died thinking about this every hour of the day and ever inventing
something new'. Mirabehan was another. She took abode in an obscure Bihar village and dogging disease and depression made experiments on potentialities of the old spinning wheel and other implements. Gandhi hoped, 'Once our people begin to appreciate the great power of charkha, writers and thinkers would also be drawn to it. They would then begin to see in it poetry and art and utility and a great deal more.'

The whole re-organization of Khadi network was based on scientific claims. AISA founded a Technical Department to carry out all experiments in the technology and process of spinning. Maganlal Gandhi was sent to a technological laboratory near Bombay to study the different instruments for testing cotton.101 Vithaldas Jerajani composed a booklet on the science of selling Khadi just as Maganlal wrote on the Science of Weaving.102 Sitting on the heaps of acclaim was not Gandhi’s way. His method was scientific and ever watchful. In a message to a periodical, Khadir Katha, he desired publication of 'true record of Khadi work from month to month.' He wanted the journal to be fully awake to the causes of Khadi’s decline by publishing interrogative reports. It was also to act as a platform for Khadi workers.103 A poverty-map of each province was made indicating regions where grinding poverty prevailed and where spinning could be carried out. AISA undertook 'scientific and diligent study' of the growth-potential of Khadi in provinces. Three kinds of spinning endeavours were introduced by sifting the poverty-map of a region. In the perpetually scarce area, spinning for wages; in all the remaining villages irrespective of depth of poverty, spinning for self; and in places, wherever possible, spinning for sacrifice; was to be introduced. AISA’s focus was on the first level of spinning that is for wages. AISA was not ready to incur liabilities to promote other two categories of spinning, for self and sacrificial.104

101 ‘There is, I observe, a technological laboratory at Matunga under your charge. Will you kindly send me a note of introduction to the Superintendent of the laboratory for our manager, Maganlal K. Gandhi, who is a cousin of mine? He would like to go there and study the different instruments for testing cotton, yarn, etc.’ ‘Letter to Sir Harold Mann’, July 28 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 209)

102 My purpose is that you should compose a booklet on the science of selling khadi as Maganlal wrote one about weaving.' ‘Letter to Vithaldas Jerajani’, July 1 1929, (CWMG vol.41, 150)

103 Message to "Khadir Katha", (CWMG vol.71, 69)

104 'Sacrificial spinning should be promoted wherever possible. Help may be given but without, as a rule, costing the head office any money on this score. Sacrificial spinning loses all merit when it is organized at a loss.' 'In Andhra Desha (III): Talks on Khadi', Young India, May 2 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 319)
AISA held the sole entitlement to certify Khadi. AISA faced some power­tussle from Congress committees when instances of latter certifying Khadi without referring to the former were reported. These certifications were illegal. The only body that was entitled by the Congress constitution to issue certificates about Khadi was the AISA. Moreover, a phrase certified Khadi was a misnomer. It was impossible to certify every piece or every article made of Khadi. Only outlets could be certified and individuals could be appointed as the agents. Such certifications were also unethical as they were meant to offset the wage rise that AISA had introduced for the spinners of its own accord. Requesting abstinence from such practices Gandhi wrote: 'Let it not be said of any Congressman and Congress committee that they are interfering with the vast experiment in nation-building that the AISA is conducting and which bids fair to put life and lustre in the dying bodies of millions of sisters whom no agency ensures even two pice per day.107

Its motive was purely philanthropic as well as economic. It was an association not of but for the poorest. Whatever its political ambitions, AISA primarily fashioned itself as an economic enterprise catering to the poorest. By offering to engage poor and idle people in a productive avenue its aim was to provide an opportunity for earning a minimum subsistence wage. Need to provide subsistence wages to ‘living

---

105 ‘One who purchases uncertified khadi is ignorant of the purpose of khadi, which was conceived as a simple means to remove the poverty of Daridranarayana. Therein lies the importance of khadi and if khadi has to play its role in removing the poverty of the millions it must be under the control of some organization or State authority. Crores of spinners would be willing to spin for eight hours for a pittance of eight pice for they must fill their bellies. Khadi made from yarn spun by them may be called hand-spun but by its use we certainly will not be serving Daridranarayana. The Charkha Sangh has therefore at once increased the spinners’ wages and attempts are being made to improve the economic condition of other artisans. Those who sell uncertified khadi are guilty of theft from khadi-artisans. To purchase such khadi is to acquire stolen property. The Charkha Sangh therefore appeals to business people to take up some other trade instead of selling [uncertified] khadi. The public should purchase khadi from khadi bhandars of the Charkha Sangh or its certified depots only. I hope all khadi-lovers will agree that khadi, be it dear or cheap, should be purchased only through the Charkha Sangh and such khadi alone should be recognized as khadi. ‘Uncertified Khadi’, Khadi Jagat, September 1941, (CWMG vol.72, 138)

106 ‘The only authority that can issue certificates about khadi is the AISA. No Congress committee has been, or can be, given the right unless the Congress resolution constituting the AISA is changed. There is no such thing as certified khadi. It is impossible to certify every piece and every article made of khadi; only shops and persons can be authorized to sell khadi approved by the AISA. I hope, therefore, that the Congress committees and Congressmen will not only not interfere with the work of the AISA, but will give their full-hearted co-operation to numerous organizations of the AISA., especially in the sale of khadi.’ ‘Notes: Complaint against Congressmen’, Harijan, December 24 1938, CWMG vol. 68: 219.

107 CWMG vol. 68: 221.
skeletons' weighed heavily upon its organizational objectives. In 1927, while on Orissa tour, Gandhi offered to disengage Khadi producers of the region from the need to market their products. He asked them to determinedly involve solely in production. 'Go on producing as much as you can.' In 1926, the AISA had on its record 110 cadres, 42,959 spinners and 3,407 weavers among whom were distributed over 9 lakh of rupees at the lowest computation. This distributing work was done at 150 production centers catering to the needs of some 1,500 villages. Over half of total remuneration that AISA gave to its spinners went to Tamil Nadu women. Afflicted with chronic famine and dry land, women there traveled miles to procure cotton slivers and receive living wages from Khadi depot. Spinners were at the bottom of heap. Over and above them spiraled a series of reclaimed occupation such as weavers, carpenters, washer men, dyers, printers, and traders. This whole network of occupations was bridged through appointed clerical staff that was paid 20 to 40 rupees a month. In the beginning of 1928 their number totaled to almost one thousand. At the apex were dedicated individuals who were honourary activists working unpaid.

In order to present Khadi as a national commodity, it was important that it was presented as a commodity with national presence. While on the one hand Gandhi emphasized local production and consumption, on the other hand market exigencies forced him to build the brand of Khadi. AISA therefore vied to open sales outlet all over the country. Towards developing brand's recall value, AISA adopted a common name for all the Khadi stores. The stores were given a uniform name of Khadi Bhandar. Gandhi derided the practice of private sales-outlet assuming private

---

108 'Make Orissa a khadi depot for the whole of India. And you cannot do so until all the spirit of rivalry goes out and all concentrate on production. There can be no rivalry between khadi and khadi. I can understand your objection to khadi from other provinces, but you should make no distinction between khadi produced in different parts of Orissa. Concentrate on unifying your efforts and co-ordinating your sales.' 'Talks to Khadi Workers', Cuttack, December 20 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 400)

109 'A spinners' association means an association not of but for the poorest. It cannot be of the poorest, for they have no knowledge of what an association is and have not even labour to save which they can give to their association. It follows therefore that if there must be an association for them, others who live on their labour make some small return to the poorest of their brothers and sisters. Of such then is this Association made.' 'All India Spinners' Association', YI, December 23 1926, (CWMG vol.32, 449)

110 'The list is a sign of the very substantial progress made by khadi since 1920. Measured by what we seek to achieve, the progress no doubt leaves much to be desired. 110 stores in four provinces should, when khadi becomes current like grain or ghee, read 110 stores in a city like Bombay alone and then they would not be too many.' 'Khadi Stores', YI, April 21 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 248)
names after their owners or some other name. All the existing outlets adopted the common name. Each of the shop was to have a franchise from AISA to call itself Khadi Bhandar. Secondly, AISA continuously worked on increasing its chain of outlets to meet the curiosity and appetite of the customers. Khadi Stores were permitted to stock indigenous silk cloth to attract more customers and also to offset loss on Khadi sales as silk cloth charged higher prices.

In Young India was presented a list of Khadi stores that nationally existed. In 1927, AISA claimed to have 110 sales-outlet owned by it or certified by or affiliated to it. ‘Measured by what we seek to achieve, the progress no doubt leaves much to be desired.’ In 1929, the Congress constituted Boycott Committee issued a countrywide list of production cum sales depot. The AISA had some 328 production-cum-sales depot scattered all over the country. But even this limited number had very uneven spread. Of this total figure, Bengal had the highest number of 66, closely followed by Tamilnadu with 64. If it showed the strides that Khadi was

111 'I note that private depots assume names after their owners or some other name. For greater convenience, I would suggest their having one name—simple Khadi Bhandar or Vastralaya, with A.I.S.A. or Congress or Private as the case may be in parenthesis. Where there are more than one in the same place they may have consecutive numbers. This is desirable so long as khadi has to be organized and nursed and so long as the various depots are either directly owned by the A.I.S.A. or are certified by and affiliated to it.' 'Khadi Stores', YI, April 21 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 248)

112 'There is a subtle rivalry going on just now between hand-manufactured silk and khadi hand-made from cotton. So far as the A.I.S.A. is concerned the matter was settled long ago. Certified khadi stores were permitted to stock indigenous silk cloth only to attract more customers for khadi and to enable the stores to make up somewhat for loss on khadi by charging fancy prices for silk cloth. The line was often overstepped by overzealous store-keepers but never with the approval of the A.I.S.A. And the very object of the All-India Spinners' Association requires it to give the first place always to khadi made of cotton. I say khadi made of cotton in order to avoid confusion in the minds of those who have seen the wider definition of khadi as being cloth hand-spun and hand-woven out of cotton, silk or wool. For I know that if khadi dies, indigenous silk dies automatically.' 'Silk and cotton', Harijan, November 7 1936, (CWMG vol.64: 8)

113 'The reason why the country is not dotted with khadi stores is that there is as yet not enough demand for khadi to warrant such stores. Experience shows that when such stores are opened, and for want of regular propaganda fail to be self-supporting and are therefore closed after a time, the money invested is lost and the movement is lost and the movement is discredited. The better thing therefore is for the All-India Spinners' Association agents to keep in touch with khaddar lovers, advertise specimens and prices and periodically hawk khaddar in the likeliest place. When they find a place with a regular and large enough demand, they may advise local moneyed men to open khaddar store whose business will be to carry on regular propaganda.' Notes: Not Available, YI, April 1 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 210)

114 'An important leaflet gives the names and addresses of sale-and-production khadi depots throughout India. It will interest the reader to know that there are in all 328 such centres of which Bengal has 66 and Tamilnad 64. Next come Andhra with 39 and Bihar with 33. Whilst by itself the list is encouraging, it is but a drop in the ocean compared with the foreign-cloth shops in the country. There is no doubt that Bombay alone has more than 328 foreign-cloth sale depots. It is for the public to capture this trade which drains away crores of rupees annually from India. One
(e) if both the producers and the sellers will realize that they must give the maximum of efficiency with the minimum of wages and that self-sacrifice is the one imperative condition of successful organization of khadi on a universal basis. 116

AISA workers undertook lecture tours and visited principal towns in their respective divisions. As a propaganda vehicle Khadi protagonists mostly relied on opportunities at direct contact with people. Maharashtra conducted annual Khadi Yatra which was gathering of believers in Khadi. 117 They obtained signatures of persons who had had vowed or who were recent converts to wearing khadi habitually. They also encouraged people to purchase annually khadi worth at least ten rupees. 'The movement of khadi in Maharashtra has undoubtedly passed through the first three stages of contempt, ridicule and indifference and has now reached the stage of active appreciation.' 118 Periodic organization of Khadi Exhibitions were not just effective aid in pushing the sales but were also of immense educational value for the local population. 119 Such organization required a plan and a method. The local AISA authority invariably contacted a prominent person in the region where exhibition was held to take responsibility for the overall organization. A known face was invited to declare open the exhibition for which a list of invitees was drawn. The exhibition was advertised by means of notices, placards, etc. In the evenings, during the exhibition time, magic lanterns lectures were given illustrating the Khadi movement. Crowds invariably got attracted to such lectures. After the exhibition was over, Khadi was hawked in the places where it was held. Exhibitions were one sure way to clear the piling stocks of producing centers. 120 The idea of having a Congress and the

116 Khadi Stores, YI, April 21 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 248)
117 Harijan, June 16 1936.
118 'The workers undertook lecturing tours and visited principal towns in their respective divisions. . . . During these visits members in charge obtained signatures of persons who had already taken the vow or who took it newly of wearing khadi habitually and also of persons who promised to purchase khadi worth at least ten rupees per year. . . . at present nearly 4,000 people . . . are habitual khadi-wearers.' 'Maharashtra Khadi Sangha', YI, August 8 1929, (CWMG vol.41, 262)
119 'Exhibitions if they can be periodically held in different places are likely to prove more effective. They have, when they are well managed, a great educational value. They also provide a neutral platform for all parties and sections to work together for the common cause. I have not yet known a public man having any objection to khaddar as such on principle.' 'Notes: Exhibition', YI, April 1 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 210)
120 'In the evenings, during the exhibition time, magic lantern lectures are given illustrating the khadi movement. Crowds are attracted to these lectures. After the exhibition is over, khadi is hawked in
exhibition originated with Gandhi.\textsuperscript{121} Gandhi wanted Congressmen to see the exhibitions with 'my eye'. Exhibitions not just showcased but also sold Khadi and other village crafts.\textsuperscript{122}

The brand was built by appealing to the sentiments and patriotism of Indians. For instance, the punchline that accompanied the report of the Khadi activities in Gandhi Ashram, Trichur, of which Rajagopalchari was the organizing secretary, said: Dress you must have, but if you choose to buy Khadi, you help the reconstruction of rural India'.\textsuperscript{123} Khadi was not merely a cloth but an idea that could reconstruct Indian economy and ameliorate India's fallen status. 'One rupee spent on Khadi giveth life, one rupee spent on foreign cloth killeth.'\textsuperscript{124} It was said that the economics of Khadi had a soul whereas that of textile-mill was soulless.\textsuperscript{125} Heart was the centre of Gandhi's appeal. He appealed to the conscience of the consumers and at the same time he gave publicity to the transparency in the Khadi business. An Ahmedabad journal gave a break-up of paid-up price that was variously distributed to needy population and not only to the coffers of mill-owner. It said that if one bought a pound of Khadi:\textsuperscript{126}

Ten annas will go to one of our peasants.
One-and-a-half to two annas will go to one of our poor carders.
Four to six annas will go to some poor woman who spun the yarn.
Eight to nine annas will go to some weaver who wove the yarn spun by those sisters.
Three-quarters of an anna will go to one of our washermen.
If you wear Khadi, all this money will remain in our country and will go to some of our poor brothers and sisters.

\textsuperscript{121} 'The idea of having the Congress and the exhibition in a village originated with me, and I must shoulder the responsibility for whatever defects or shortcomings you will notice here.' 'Speech at Opening of Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition', December 25 1936, CWMG vol. 64: 171

\textsuperscript{122} 'The spinning-wheel should be the central theme of all such village exhibitions and the industries suited to the particular locality should revolve round it. An exhibition thus arranged would naturally become an object-lesson for the villagers and an educational treat when it is accompanied by demonstrations, lectures and leaflets.' 'A Humble villager of Birbhum', Harijan, January 9 1937, (CWMG vol.64, 217)

\textsuperscript{123} Khadi Economics, YI, December 1 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 356)

\textsuperscript{124} Foreign Cloth Boycott, YI, April 18 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 261)

\textsuperscript{125} 'Spinning is an activity which awakens religious sentiment and purifies the soul.' 'Scheme of Self-reliance', September 1 1929, (CWMG vol.41, 346)

\textsuperscript{126} Majoor Sandesh, a journal published by the Majoor Mahajan, Ahmedabad, (CWMG vol.24,120)
Charkha Sangh took to advertise through loud-speakers, popular gramophone records etc to push the sale of Khadi. Despite the widespread feeling that medium of advertising was 'undignified and incompatible with the Khadi spirit', Gandhi approved of the method.\footnote{127} The AISA advertisements’ most celebrated of comments, and one that appealed most to discerning purchasers, claimed that ninety-five percent of sales price went directly in the kitty of direct producers. Only five percent of sales price went to middle men, comprising of organizing-associates and sales agent. It had other advantages too. Khadi’s roughness, it was propagated, was particularly suited for being used as towel. Cleansing freshly bathed body with Khadi towel stimulated the skin. It was said that coarseness of Khadi was to be tolerated for the sake of Swaraj, or, rather, for the sake of starving Indians. Coarse Khadi could be used to make shorts. It was convenient for washing and used less cloth. If dhoti is worn in South Indian style, that is, without being tucked up, that too saved the cloth.\footnote{128}

Gandhi’s date of birth for Khadi-lovers became an occasion to organize Sutra Yajna (Sacrificial spinning) and an occasion for pushing khadi sales. Gandhi allowed his birth-day to be exploited and attempted unsuccessfully to transform the occasion from Gandhi Jayanti to Rentia Jayanti.\footnote{129} Rentia is Gujarati for Charkha.\footnote{130} The Jayanti date came to be associated with Khadi Week during which extra effort was made to popularize Khadi and other village crafts. Provincial Associations collected donations, conducted spinning competition, and organized open sales and exhibitions in their respective localities. Gandhi even appealed to the general public to continue

\footnote{127} ‘Khadi and Advertisement’, Harijan, June 1 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 107)
\footnote{128} ‘Three Questions’, Navajivan, July 26 1931, (CWMG vol.47, 209)
\footnote{129} ‘Gandhi Jayanti’ is just a pretext, the real thing is Charkha Jayanti. Had there been no charkha, there would perhaps have been no Jayanti (Birthday) celebrations, and even if there had been such celebrations, they would have had little importance. There is no point in having birthday celebrations of any person without any definite end in view, otherwise they must be confined to just the innocent rejoicings of relatives and friends. But because Gandhi Jayanti has been turned into Charkha Jayanti—a great and comprehensive end—the celebration has assumed a national importance. The Charkha Sangh has decided to celebrate the Jayanti by collecting funds for khadi work, by enlisting self-spinners, and making yarn collections. In fixing up its programme it has had before it the example of Shri Narandas Gandhi’s annual work in this direction. Without khadi there may come a time when people may have to go without any clothing. Only the Charkha Sangh can prevent this catastrophe. I hope that all will co-operate with the Sangh in its noble endeavour.’ ‘Charkha Jayanti’, Harijan, August 9 1942, (CWMG vol.76, 324)
\footnote{130} ‘But ever since my birthday was first celebrated with pomp in India, I made it known as Rentia Baras.’ ‘Rentia Baras’, Harijanbandhu, August 15 1937.
the tradition even beyond his life. The birthday began to be observed only when it became identified with the revival of the spinning wheel in its ‘modern form’, making it the symbol of freedom of the masses through constructive means. Gandhi’s birthday became a propaganda vehicle for the spread of Khadi. Since his sixty-sixth birthday, a spinning spree for so many days was launched. The organizers also appealed for as many lakhs of yards of spun yarn as a gift to Gandhi. Gandhi’s birthday week came to be called as Khadi Week. It occasioned non-stop sacrificial spinning during the days leading to Gandhi’s birthday.

Collected Work has reference to numerous letters that Gandhi wrote to causal correspondents as well as close comrades advising them to wear Khadi. Many of the correspondents faced familial pressure to don more colourful dress in place of drab Khadi. Gandhi usually came to their rescue. A lady correspondent, whose mother-in-law demanded that she wear fine textile in place of Khadi, was advised by Gandhi to ‘buy two Bangalore saris’ only if to satisfy the older woman. ‘I am sure that if you persist, you will infect your surroundings with your faith in khadi’, she was told.

No coercion was to be adopted in the spread of Khadi.

Gandhi saw ‘unlimited scope’ for Khadi in Sind as her women wore not colourful saris but ‘white scarf without borders’. But due to the lack of enthusiasm

131 ‘Khadi lovers made the date of my birth an occasion for pushing Khadi sales. I did not mind such exploitation of my birthday but tried with more or less success to give it the name of Rentia Jayanti so far as the Gujarati speaking public was concerned.’ ‘Notes: Surplus Khadi’, Harijan September 16 1939, CWMG vol. 70: 167

132 ‘The Annual Spinning Sacrifice’, Harijan, July 21 1940, (CWMG vol.72, 279)

133 ‘Plying the charkha on the Charkha Jayanti Day amounts to ceremonial worship of it. To introduce into it a ritual is to bring the charkha into disrepute. If you ask me why, when they spin, I permit them to have a lamp with ghee during broad daylight, my answer will be that in a large measure it is due to my sense of tolerance, also to my weakness. I have always opposed the ceremonial worship of the Gita or the manner in which Gita Jayanti is celebrated at present. I have also forbidden the composing of a hymn in praise of the Gita to be recited on the Gita Jayanti Day.’ CWMG vol. 82: 12.

134 ‘If your mother-in-law is so unreasonable, I suppose it is better that you let her buy two Bangalore saris. You will wear them only when you find it absolutely necessary for the sake of your mother-in-law. I am sure that if you persist, you will infect your surroundings with your faith in khadi.’ Letter to Kanthimathi’, February 24 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 32)

135 ‘Do not inflict Khadi on (peons) as a compulsory duty, but create love of Khadi in them’. (CWMG vol.74: 278, 323)
among men the propaganda suffered. In Gandhi's scheme of things it was the 'human will' that was in short supply and not the 'human spindles and human looms' that India had in millions. In March 1929, Gandhi visited Burma. It was a journey principally to raise fund for Khadi activities. He hoped to collect a sum of a lakh of rupees from Burma at a time when the world economy was badly hit by recession.

Gandhi was even reluctant to exhibit Khadi along with mill-textiles. AISA had refused participation in Swadeshi exhibitions which permitted stalls of mill-textiles. In UP, the average Khadi workers agreed with the general AISA policy regarding participation. Congress workers however saw it differently. In those exhibitions, there were generally 'a good sale of Khadi'. From the perspective of maintaining Khadi's uniqueness, it was thought better to incur some loss rather than get lost in the melee of textiles that were exhibited at such exhibitions. But AISA's non participation could not exclude non-certified Khadi's presence in such exhibitions. People were beguiled to buy non-certified Khadi that not only adversely affected AISA's name but also its sales. Whereas AISA certified Khadi was propagated as pure, others were seen as spurious. All through Khadi had succeeded in building a firm foundation for itself, and there was a loyal band of customers. But there were vast occasional buyers who did not particularly discern between certified and non-certified Khadi. It was this section of causal purchasers that were needed to be converted to buy only-AISA Khadi. These causal purchasers could have made

---

136 'As in Travancore so in Sind there is unlimited scope for khadi propaganda for the simple reason that the women of Sind, young and old, do not go in for coloured saris with picturesque borders. If men of Sind will but do a little national propaganda among the womenfolk, they should have no difficulty in inducing them to take to khadi. But the painful fact is that with a few honourable exceptions they are not interested in khadi. The terrible poverty of the people which they do not see fails to move them. Hence Sind is perhaps one of the most backward provinces in point of khadi.' 'Sind Impressions', Young India, February 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 9)

137 'Khadi has no limits. For we have millions of human spindles and lakhs of human looms. Foreign cloth boycott', Young India, March 7 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 95-7)

138 'I am going there principally in the interest of khadi and the Gujarat Vidyapith which has always had munificent support from the Gujarati colony in Burma.' 'My Impending visit to Burma', Young India, February 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 15)

139 'I hope to collect here about one lac of rupees. It won't be a bad sum for Burma to pay during these times of trade depression.' 'Letter to Mirabel', March 16 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 154)

140 They say khadi does not gain by being exhibited alongside mill-cloth. It is not intended to supplement the latter, it is intended to sup-plant it. Khadi has a mission of its own. It is part of national education and it stands for new and true economics at least for India. Letter to J. K. Sharma, June 17, 1936, CWMG vol.63: 66.
success of commercial Khadi. By not exhibiting Khadi at mixed-exhibitions somehow kept away the causal purchasers who could have been converted into regular purchasers by sustained propaganda to the mind or heart. Nehru advised exhibition of Khadi in Swadeshi exhibitions with certain caveats. He asked for clear distinction to be maintained between Khadi and mill-textile and secondly, to keep away foreign textiles from such exhibitions. But in search of exclusive presence of Khadi in exhibitions, AISA should not shun such exhibitions. Gandhi however was of the opinion that it could be dangerous to juxtapose Khadi along with textiles as that would befog the mass mind. With the formation of AIVIA in 1934, it was decided all future Congress exhibitions would jointly be organized by AISA and AIVIA. Earlier exhibitions even raised finances to partly support the holding of Congress session. It was not spectacular but educative in its content. Congressmen were expected to be 'voluntary advertising agents' so as to attract larger crowd to its precincts. At Lucknow Congress in March 1936, for the first time, an exhibition was held under the joint responsibility of AISA and AIVIA. It was for the first time conception of a true rural exhibition was given a reality.

Gandhi's aggressive espousal of Khadi gave it an identity and popularity. In its wake arrived Khadi's spurious cousins. Spurious Khadi produced and sold by mills

141 'It is very like putting human beings side by side with robots. Human beings may be worsted in the competition if they allow themselves to be compared to robots. Even so will khadi fare, in comparison with mill-made cloth. The planes of the two are different. The aims are opposite. Khadi gives work to all, mill-cloth gives work to some and deprives many of honest labour. Khadi serves the masses, mill-cloth is intended to serve the classes. Khadi serves labour, mill-cloth exploits it. My experience is backed by that of the khadi workers throughout India. I hope therefore that with Jawaharlal Nehru the Congressmen of U.P. will respect the experience and the policy of the AISA in preference to their own opinion, if it be against that of the AISA.' 'Khadi in Swadeshi Exhibitions', Harijan, April 10 1937, CWMG vol.65: 69.

142 'Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition', Lucknow, March 28 1936, (CWMG vol.62: 298)

143 Ignorance about Khadi was widespread. Gandhi reports of a group of people who came to see him wearing what they called 'mill-made Khadi'. Gandhi also found that cloths stamped 'Swadeshi Cloth Mark' had invaded the market and sold as Khadi. Gandhi suggested printing of leaflets explaining what is meant by Khadi brought out and distributed. 'Volunteers should very politely put this leaflet into the hands of all persons who are not clad in khadi. Description of khadi should be written out on large wooden boards and big leaders, not hired men, should parade the streets wearing these. When I am in a position to undertake tours, I shall be ready to enlist my name among such workers. While I remain in Ahmedabad, I am ready to move every day for one hour in the city market carrying such boards.' 'My Notes: Mill-Made Khadi', Navajivan, June 1 1924, CWMG vol. 24: 167.
largely captured the market created by the Khadi propaganda.\textsuperscript{144} Much spurious Khadi circulated in the market and competed with genuine Khadi.\textsuperscript{145} Spurious khadi was being palmed off on the customers as Gandhi cloth. Sometimes the mill-owners embossed Gandhi’s portrait over their textiles. Increased demand for Khadi was responsible for duplicity in Khadi market. It indicated changing sartorial tastes. In Gandhi’s words, consumers were ‘prepared to make a sacrifice. They ask for coarse cloth. But they are being foully deceived by the mill-owners who do not hesitate to exploit their patriotic sentiment.’ AISA appealed to the public to buy Khadi from certified Khadi shops. Time and again Young India published warning notes for buyers who were sold mill-cloth as Khadi by the merchants. Young India also published a list of Khadi Bhandar shops in different cities that were certified by AISA. The sale of spurious Khadi did assume dangerous proportion as is evident from Gandhi’s warning notes that were regularly published in his journals.\textsuperscript{146} This was clear signal to AISA to increase their production. The strategy that was adopted was two-fold: production was decentralized and sales was centralized. It was decided to pool prices of Khadi produced in various centers to bring down the average.\textsuperscript{147} In order to protect Khadi from its unscrupulous use by mill-owners, Rajagopalchari proposed a bill that protected the names of ‘Khadi’ and ‘Khaddar’ as solely denoting hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. AISA claimed a patent of the names for exclusive use.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{144} Letter to Motilal Nehru, March 27 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 145) also, A Mill-owner on Boycott, YI, April 5 1928, (CWMG vol.36, 188-9)

\textsuperscript{145} In a statement to the press issued on September 24 1941, Gandhi moaned: ‘I understand that uncertified dealers are issuing handies for the Charkha Week. This is wholly unauthorized and harmful to khadi. I request the public to beware of unauthorized dealers in khadi.’ 'Statement to the Press', September 24 1941, The Hindu.

\textsuperscript{146} The Association has repeatedly warned the public that they should not regard any khadi as genuine which does not come from a certificated khadi bhandar. What is one to say however of those who are selling spurious khadi and thus damaging a vast national movement specially designed in the interest of famishing millions?’ 'Notes: Khadi Buyers' Beware', Young India, November 21 1929, (CWMG vol.42, 192)

\textsuperscript{147} 'Speech to Khadi Workers', Before December 20 1928, (CWMG vol.38, 246)

\textsuperscript{148} The bill was short and effective and if it became law it could at once prevent those unpatriotic mill-owners and foreigners who manufacture coarse cloth and sell it under the label khaddar or khadi. It read: ‘Whereas the name ‘khaddar’ and ‘khadi’ have come to mean cotton cloth which is spun and woven by hand in India;
And Whereas it is desirable to protect the said names; It is hereby enacted as follows:

a) This Act may be called the Indian Khaddar (Name Protection) Act 1929.
In marketing Khadi it was claimed that its steadfast adherence to scrupulous interaction with customers was its main strength. 'Khadi has no other support except truth, patience and faith.' For tardy growth in Khadi sales Gandhi sometimes absolved Khadi workers. It was a fact of the trade that only those imbued with patriotism and scarifies and selflessness took to Khadi wearing. Many an innovation in marketing Khadi though was introduced. Ready-to-wear garments, standard pricing irrespective of place, vegetable dyeing of Khadi to suit the tastes of customers, opening of chain of Khadi Bhandars, recruiting the services of merchants like GD Birla and others. In 1926, the company of Gandhi had so influenced G D Birla that he took to lifelong Khadi vow. Birla was also roped in

b) In this Act, 'khaddar' and 'khadi' mean cotton cloth which is spun and woven by hand in India.

c) The names 'khaddar' and 'khadi' whether in English or in any Indian vernacular language as exclusively signifying cotton cloth spun and woven in India by hand shall be deemed to be trade descriptions within the meaning of the Merchandise Marks Act IV of 1889.' 'Khadi in the Legislatures', Young India, March 28 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 187)

149 'A khadi worker or a khadi seller must have endless patience. Khadi has no other support except truth, patience and faith.' 'Fair Dealing', Navajivan, July 1 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 5)

150 At Simla, Khadi shop always ran in loss. A defective Management was part responsible. But the people in Simla looked down upon khadi and there was a class that was afraid to wear it. The wearers became marked men. Amrit Kaur suggested a swadeshi mart on the Mall. Though the idea was attractive, Gandhi found its execution risky. 'However good swadeshi articles may be, they must suffer in comparison. And I doubt the utility of aiming at gaudiness. I differentiate between art and gaudiness. What one sees in fashionable shop windows is by no means all art. To produce things of real beauty and hope to put them side by side with the showy things of the Mall in Simla is an expensive ambition which we had better suppress at least for this season.' Letter to Amrit Kaur (CWMG Vol. 61: 143)

151 'The manner in which they conduct their trade at present will not do in the khadi trade. As no consideration is given to the good of the buyer in present-day business, the merchant regards himself for the most part as free from any moral obligations. If this code is applied to khadi, khadi will perish. Hence only merchants with a saintly nature can trade in khadi. An average merchant will not earn much from the sale of khadi. A merchant who does ordinary business hopes to earn money quickly, whereas khadi merchants have to content themselves with merely making a living. A trader in ordinary cloth has a fixed line and has standard varieties, whereas a khadi merchant has to hit upon new ways every day. Hence we cannot expect many merchants to engage in khadi trade at present.' 'Merchants and Khadi', Navajivan, April 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 273)

152 'Attempts are being made to standardize certain varieties of khadi, but the present correspondent and others should know that there is a limit to this. Khadi is not produced in factories, but in millions of homes and hence its yarn is not uniform; therefore, there will always be variation in its quality. That there are variations is not a matter for regret. That which has no distinctiveness and individuality is no art. There is bound to be the impress of some hand on every hank of yarn. This is impossible in the case of machine-made yarn.' 'Merchants and Khadi', Navajivan, April 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 272)

153 'I congratulate you on your khadi vow and also those who persuaded you to take it. You will personally gain by this, and the public too will benefit by it.' Letter to G D Birla', April 11 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 277)
later for streamlining Khadi sales. In order to increase market share of Khadi, AISA began to propagate and produce ready-made Khadi garments.\textsuperscript{154} When King Edward Memorial Hospital owned by Bombay Corporation bought Khadi in bulk for their clothing needs, it opened a new avenue for Khadi sales. 'If all the national or private hospitals and kindred institutions were to make their cloth purchase in Khadi, they would alone absorb the whole of the present yearly output of Khadi throughout India', Gandhi scented an opportunity of institutional sales.\textsuperscript{155} That made AISA focused on institutional needs to increase its sales. The Assam Council successfully piloted a resolution calling upon the local Government to make all its cloth purchase in Khadi. When in 1937 Congress ministries got formed, Gandhi called for the state purchases of cloth to be made in Khadi.\textsuperscript{156}

AISA was a business venture with philanthropic ethics. It therefore showed little tolerance to loss-making units or defaulting individuals.\textsuperscript{157} In 1926, it ordered closure of all loss-making Bhandars. Gandhi called for closing down of those loss-making stores on account of their mismanagement.\textsuperscript{158} It also stopped all 'credit-sales' as it gave rise to considerable losses of avoidable nature. Even registered hawkers were asked to deposit a sum equivalent to the value of Khadi taken. Its resolution said: ‘Cash securities be insisted from the hawkers covering the amount of stock taken by them...’ If desirable hawkers were unable to furnish such securities, it relaxed its rule by saying personal securities could be taken. In its 8\textsuperscript{th} meeting held in December

\textsuperscript{154} 'Just as we have readymade khadi caps on the market, why not khadi vests and shirts both after the Indian and European styles?’ ‘Ready-made Khadi clothes’, Young India, November 17 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 263)

\textsuperscript{155} 'Notes: Khadi in hospitals', Young India, January 27 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 20)

\textsuperscript{156} ‘Khadi being dearer was purchased mostly by those driven by philanthropic or patriotic zeal. But those who have no spare cash will not be easily actuated by philanthropy or patriotism. It is therefore the business of the State to shut out or tax heavily enough such goods as compete with those which, for the general good, should command a market. I think it can be taken as proved that Khadi comes under such goods. The administration of eight provinces is virtually in Congress hands to an extent enough to protect Khadi and the like.’ (CWMG vol.70: 92)

\textsuperscript{157} To Motilal Roy, who worked for Khadi and ran an organization called Prabartak Sangha, Gandhi was curt and yet soft. Roy had been hesitating to give a required promissory note. ‘The AISA is a huge concern which has the poorest of the land as its only concern. It must put all its transactions on a sound legal footing. Then only it can be morally sound. ...if you can not accept the requirements, surely the least you should do is to stop Khadi work altogether.' Letter to Motilal Roy, June 29 1941, (CWMG vol.74, 129)

\textsuperscript{158} Notes: Khadi sales, Young India, November 18 1926, (CWMG vol.32, 60)
1926, the council took straightforward decision to strictly ban all 'credit-sales' either for retail or wholesale transaction. It discouraged amateurish and altruistic entrepreneurs. It found that inexperienced but enthusiastic entrepreneurs organized production units but could never maintain the quality output. It had to buy their badly spun yarn. Though, AISA was ready to buy any amount of hand-spun yarn that was well-twisted, positively strong and even, it incurred heavy losses in propping up such enthusiastic but amateurish entrepreneurs. It therefore advocated only experts to come forward for organizing spinning centers.¹⁵⁹

AISA was a public body and yet professionally managed and run very businesslike. From the minutes of its council meet, it does appear to work like any business organization. But here and there, in its important resolutions, it betrayed its philanthropic core. While it acted as a business outfit, it also gave space for experimentation even if it meant monetary loss in the beginning. Its council resolution on the issue read: ‘As a general rule provincial branches should not propose to open or maintain center of production which can be run only at a loss, but where it is considered desirable in the interest of the movement that any center should be run or maintained even at a loss, no more than 10% of the total capital to be invested for production in the province that be proposed to be invested in such pioneer effort.’ Raising the wages of spinners unilaterally was its second most important policy decision that proved AISA's philanthropic intentions.

Khadi kept oscillating between altruism and commercialism. 'For me the sale of khadi is the best thermometer for measuring India's peaceful progress.' Even though Gandhi would always try to distinguish Khadi from pure commercial ventures, he was not shy of comparing its growth in reference to that of other ventures. 'How many shops are there in Bombay which sell mill-cloth both foreign and Indian? What is their daily sale? And how many khadi shops are there? We shall have to hang our heads in shame if these figures are compared.'²⁶⁰ While its inspiration was altruistic, its compulsion was commercial.²⁶¹ Profit motive was not encouraged; neither was

¹⁵⁹ Letter to R M Deshmukh, July 1 1928, (CWMG vol.37, 11)
¹⁶⁰ 'For me the sale of Khadi is the best thermometer for measuring India's peaceful progress.' 'Long Live Khadi', Harijanbandhu, March 28 1937, CWMG vol. 65, 29
¹⁶¹ Letter to G D Birla, January 14 1929, (CWMG vol.38, 349)
loss-making units tolerated. One rule was to depend on extensive business rather than high rates for profits on capital invested. Gandhi called the Khadi Movement as the ‘greatest cooperative effort of modern times’ and wanted AISA to develop itself into ‘the largest cooperative society in the world.’ Everyone, the advocates, organizers, traders, and numerous others who were involved in Khadi business, were ‘ trustees’ for the welfare of millions of spinners. It was their well-being that was of paramount concern. ‘In ordinary commerce the maxim is that we look after ourselves and those with whom we trade have to look after themselves. The position in khadi trade is reversed.’ Khadi was organized on principles polar apart from those of mainstream business concern. Its organization was not for selfish exploitation and personal aggrandizement but for the service of the poor. It is this differing aim that distinguished Khadi enterprise from other similar commercial ventures. Otherwise, method of organization was similar to mainstream venture.

The contradiction between altruistic and commercial intentions slimmed chances of Khadi’s commercial success. The brand that Khadi was slowly building for itself was drawn from its avid association with ideals. It was not merely a commercial brand. It was consciously built as brand of purity and patriotism, of simplicity and sacrifice. Yet, its commercial success was as important as for any other commodity for its continued growth. For its commercial success it was dependent on the sympathy of merchants. Merchants as Gandhi had found were there not for altruism in trade. ‘The manner in which they conduct their trade at present will not do in the Khadi trade. As no consideration is given to the good of the buyer in present day business, the merchant regards himself for the most part as free from any moral obligations. If this code is applied to Khadi, Khadi will perish.’ Hence saintly

---

162 ‘The greatest business concerns in the world do not depend for profit on high rates but extensive business. If I can gain the confidence of the people of India I hope to make the A.I.S.A. the largest co-operative society in the world. Speech at Khadi Vastralaya, Rajatalayam, October 4 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 77)

163 ‘Everyone who enters into this khadi business must approach it in the spirit of trustees. The welfare of the millions of the spinners must be held predominant over every other thing.’ Speech at Public Meeting, Rajatalayam, October 4 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 80)

164 ‘Khadi has been conceived as the foundation and symbol of ahimsa. A real Khadi-wearer will not utter an untruth. I am not talking about the hypocrites who don Khadi, or about those who do it to fill their bellies. A real Khadi-wearer will harbour no violence, no deceit, and no impurity.’ (CWMG vol.66: 372)

165 Gandhi called for an acceptance of Khadi by all. ‘Khadi may be worn by the devout as well as by the hypocrite or the treacherous; by the chestiest of wives as well as by a prostitute.’ (66, 372)
merchants were needed for Khadi sales who were rare breed. Also, merchants by nature were timid and prone to temptation and threat. Further merchants had standard goods to sell and desired quick money. Both of these were not yet possible in Khadi sector. There was a suggestion that certain varieties of Khadi be sold at standard prices nationally like postcards, merchants being paid certain commission on sales. 166 But to standardize Khadi production was a difficult proportion. Unlike mill cloth, Khadi was not produced in factories with standard spindles but by illiterate villagers in millions of poor rural habitats. Its yarn therefore was not uniformly even inducing inevitable variation in cloth quality. These variations added to Khadi’s distinctiveness and individuality. It was its USP.

Yet AISA tried setting standards of hand spinning that rivaled with mill-spinning. In one of its evaluation of spinners, the AISA noted in its report that: These yarns have been singled out for neatness and evenness. But even the best does not come up to the mill yarn standard. 167 In some way AISA in promoting hand spinning and Khadi was competing against the mill-textile’s super-smoothness and affordable pricing. In these days there was talk of Khadi being alternative to mill-textile rather than celebrating its uniquely different texture. Gandhi understood it but exigencies of providing survival wages to the marginal population weighed heavily upon his strategies. And, hence the promoters continuously measured their achievement by the standards of market. It was a trap that would beguile the promoters as well as the consumers. In many substantial ways it was this trap that sapped Khadi’s potential. Experiments were conducted to demonstrate that ‘given good cotton and good carding, it is possible to draw fine thread that would beat the strongest mill yarn of the same count’. In some way exigencies were making the promoters to cater to market sensibilities. But irony was that at the same time they brandished Khadi as symbol that identified movement’s ideological severance with market.

AISA aimed at producing yarns that were more even in texture and more durable than mill-yarn. Improvement in the quality of yarn—its texture and strength—was necessary for the wider acceptability among the weavers. Strength of a yarn

166 ‘Merchants and Khadi’, Navajivan, April 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 273)

167 ‘Experiments are now being made to demonstrate that given good cotton and good carding, it is possible to draw fine thread that would beat the strongest mill yarn of the same count.’ ‘Notes: Room for Improvement’, YI, April 29 1926, (CWMG vol.30, 380)
meant quality of twist. A properly twisted thread was difficult to break. A weakly
twisted yarn was not good enough for weavers. They needed well-twisted and even
yarn to minimize breakage. If the thread was uneven it broke frequently, sapping a
weaver’s progress and profit. The more even the thread the better it was for
weaving.\footnote{Constant looking at the strand after the spinning is finished enables one to gauge the evenness,
and the actual breaking of the yarn in order to gauge the strength enables one to arrive roughly at
the possible strength.' 'Letter to N Bahadurji', June 27 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 64)} It was the tenuous strength of the thread that made weavers reluctant to
commit for weaving the hand-spun yarn. Another reason for their indifference was
borne out of their lack of faith in the whole movement. Gandhi wrote to
Gangadharrao Deshpande, a Karnataka loyalist and Khadi activist, advising greater
industry in improving the quality of yarn so as to win over weaver’s confidence.
‘Time will give them the necessary faith and our application must improve the quality
of the yarn.... Within limits our wheels do admit of improvement.’\footnote{‘About the disinclination of the weavers to weave hand-spun yarn, there are two reasons. One is
that our yarn is not as strong as mill yarn and the other is [that] the weavers are not satisfied that
hand-weaving has come to stay.' 'Letter to Ganagdharrao Deshpande', July 27 1926, (CWMG
vol.31, 200)} The
movement’s effort had secured yarns-count of eighty; charkha spinning had begun to
yield 800 yards per hour; the process was making all round improvements.

Theoretically, Khadi had immense possibility of growth. Each of the hamlets
could instantly transform itself into a miniature-spinning mill requiring little capital
investment or technical expertise. It was potentially a powerful idea of transformation,
pregnant with far-reaching consequences for ethics and circle of consumption. The
idea was to induce consumers to only wear Khadi so that an insistent demand would
bring in merchants’ interest. Khadi then would not only be produced in every village
but it would gain the status of a trans-national commodity that had acquired its own
independent momentum. But from practical point of view it was nothing but creation
of an alternative production and consumption pattern on a massive scale. As it took on
an established mechanism of foreign trade and also indigenous textile producers, it
was a gargantuan effort. Odds against it stood upright. Yet the simplicity of idea was
profound. In it’s most advanced state of development, after Khadi had become a
‘current coin’, as Gandhi envisioned and postulated, ‘the toiling millions will spin
their own yarn and get it woven by the village weaver’. It would be a ‘natural
decentralization’ of an economic imperative. Such a system harbored least of fraud.
It was like before when British merchants stamped out indigenous manufacturing system yet it was not merely a past practice, a continuation of tradition.

Gandhi hoped to make Khadi a fully commercial proposition. Its slow growth did not dishearten him. 'After all sound commerce', Gandhi said, 'is of slow growth'. He regarded Khadi to be 'the shortest route to healthy commercial prosperity of individuals as it certainly will be of the nation'. It was important for Khadi Movement to have an alternative understanding of mechanism. As Gandhi said: 'the movement is bound to fail if we expect to succeed by adopting the same methods, or very nearly the same methods with necessary adaptations, as the adversary, if such a term can be properly used under a plan of life which admits of no enemies. In my opinion, we have to devise other ways of making the movement a living and universal force at least so far as India is concerned. The adversary believes in the latest appliances and therefore is bound to adopt the methods of those who are adepts in using those appliances; but in the spinning movement, modern appliances are largely discarded and the few that are retained are used in a different way.' The use of mill-slivers which were easier to procure at least in big cities like Bombay or Ahmedabad was discouraged. The idea was to provide an impetus to all the hand-processes in connection with raw cotton. It was to provide an easy uniform cottage industry. Moreover, the use of mill-sliver went contrary to the central precept of the movement. If one could use mill-slivers then one could very well use mill-spun yarn. Similarly, AISA policy though not against the foreign dyes but was to make researches in indigenous dyes only.

---

170 'Foreign Cloth Boycott', YI, April 25 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 281)

171 'Khadi Service will never give you Rs. 25,000. But if the movement goes forward with a leap, khadi will become a commercial proposition, and when it does become that, there will be a moderate amount of money in it also.' 'Letter to Satcowripati Ray', May 19 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 340-2)

172 'The spinning movement, so far as I can see, will never afford the high wages that are demanded by good men in such a line of business. The proper working of the spinning movement is still being evolved. It is in a state of flux, and it will be some time before it can be said to be stabilized. It is a movement which has to grow from within. It is a movement which requires a fair measure of continuous sacrifice from those who have become accustomed to city life. The class of men and women required for the movement have got to be trained and brought up. They cannot therefore be had by advertising.' 'Letter to R B Gregg', May 27 1927, (CWMG vol.33, 376-80)

173 Our Helplessness, YI, March 21 1929, (CWMG vol.40, 23) The prices of foreign dyes increased considerably owing to the war. In order to make khadi attractive, the A. I. S. A. had allowed the use of foreign dyes for colouring khadi cloth. Now if the use of foreign dyes is continued, there
Can Khadi, a commodity said to be symbolic produce of non-violent production mechanism, be sold to military establishment? This very question arose on Gandhi when one of AISA Bhandars received an order from Khadi blanket from the military. Delivering the order amounted to helping the war. Gandhi advised compliance of order. It was a breach of the abstract principle of non-violence. Yet, Gandhi argued, non-violence is much like geometrical line, which cannot be drawn but only imagined. One must therefore practice as best as one could. It was this realization of practicality that made Gandhi against forbidding such transaction. 'It would have been easy for me to forbid the sale of the blankets. (But) where should I draw the line from which such prohibition should commence? If I were a grain merchant, should I decline to sell it to soldiers? Or, if I were a chemist, should I refuse to sell quinine and other drugs to them? 174 It was such fine-edge policy decisions that made Khadi, or even the whole of Gandhian dogma, fraught to abuse. Dilemma regarding taking legal recourse was another instance, which made AISA suffer financial loss and embezzlements. Its method of trust in business bore it sore experiences. There were cases of embezzlement of AISA finances by some of its workers. In one case AISA suffered lacs of loss due to the fudging of audit records. It tried to extract its misappropriated money by following its traditional policy of avoiding the law courts. 175

The irony was that it was not the boycott movement that raised the demand of Khadi among the conscious consumers. It was its transformation into a uniform of freedom that brought its surging popularity. It was therefore during the crests of struggle that Khadi touched the peak of consumption. In the period between 1919 and 1929, Gandhi worked hard in propagating and systematizing Khadi consumption and production. Meanwhile in the interregnum Khadi had also changed its meaning. In 1919-22, it was mostly a slogan for boycott through Khadi that had brought its

will have to be an increase in the price of khadi. The best way of avoiding the increase is for khadi depots to drop the use of foreign dyes and restrict themselves to the use of indigenous dyes and be satisfied with such colours as can be produced therefrom. But this can be done only if the public will, by simplifying their taste, encourage the A. I. S. A. in the experiment. If they will, it is just possible that necessity will be the mother once more of many inventions in the matter of producing beautiful colours from indigenous dyes.' CWMG vol.70: 167

174 Blankets for Soldiers, Khadi Jagat, September 1941, (CWMG vol.74, 329)

175 'The progress of Khadi does not depend upon the ups and downs of the market. It depends upon the purity of our transaction.' Khadi Jagat', CWMG vol.74: 59-60
popularity. But in the period 1929-32, Khadi was worn more as ‘uniform of freedom’ than as replacement for foreign cloth. Its texture got interwoven with rebellious mood of the times. Its wearer knew exactly why he was wearing and the very act taunted the law-enforcement authority.

Even while continuing to be such, Gandhi was reluctant to concede political character to AISA. It was for obvious reasons that he fiercely protected AISA’s non-political aims. He reiterated that AISA was as much political as any endeavour done with pure-progressive motive was. When it was said that the government servants were debarred from contributing into Khadi Fund that supported AISA activities, Gandhi took up the cudgels. AISA’s affiliation with the Congress had brought it within the purview of governmental suspicion. But Gandhi made it clear that mere owning the parentage and patronage of the Congress did not deem AISA to be a political association worthy of governmental suspicion, espionage and harassment. ‘Is it not possible for the Congress to have its political, its social, its moral, its economic, medical, sociological and such other departments, all integral parts of that organization, and yet wholly self-governing and wholly independent each of the others?’ Gandhi argued. In the preamble of AISA two things stood out in unequivocal and emphatic terms. Firstly, that it was unaffected and uncontrolled by politics, political changes, or political bodies. Secondly, that it had an independent existence and powers. ‘How such an association could be called a political association, simply because it is an integral part of the Congress, and also because like a bank it has accepted the agency of the Congress for the collection of yarn subscription, passes comprehension’, Gandhi asked.

176 'The A.I.S.A. is a purely humanitarian economic institution. As such it has no politics, even though it has received its charter from the Congress. It is a purely autonomous body. All can, therefore, help it without any scruples. Khadi has no doubt a political, as it has an economic and humanitarian, significance. And viewed as a symbol of non-violence, even its political significance in no way detracts from its moral appeal. For genuine and unadulterated non-violence can have no colour of party politics. And the Congress will cease to be a party label but will be universally acknowledged as national institution having no quarrel with any party or nation.' 'Khadi Week, Harijan, September 23 1940, (CWMG vol.73, 46-8)

177 The Association is proud of its being an integral part of the Congress organization, and it will deem it an honour and a privilege to work under the Congress banner, so long as that venerable national institution regards it as worthy of its patronage. But if by merely owning the parentage and patronage of the Congress an institution becomes a political association, the interpretation would involve most awkward consequences, which I hope no self-respecting Government servant will tolerate. What is political association? YI, July 7 1927, (CWMG vol.34, 126-8)
In its 22nd meeting held just before Gandhi's leaving of Ashram premises for Dandi, on 21st March 1930, AISA prepared for meeting the eventualities that might occur in case of launch of civil-disobedience movement. In its resolution passed on that day, it said, 'The council of AISA wishes to impress on all its workers the importance of maintaining the Khadi and other constructive national work in full working order despite the call of its present active phase of the national struggle. While it permits every worker that desires to join the civil disobedience campaign to do so, it is hoped that care will be taken that khadi work is not disorganized by reason of such enlistments. Branches endeavour to maintain a reserve of new workers to take place those who leave Khadi work to join the CDM.' Workers who joined the CDM were treated to be on leave without allowances. CDM brought in its wake arrest of almost all the officiating members of AISA. In its 23rd meeting held on 24th October 1930, the council noted the fact and appointed new members who were nominated by the preceding office-bearers. During the CDM, all provincial branches registered profits of varying degree. It attracted the attention of Income Tax department which slapped a heavy penalty for the non-payment of tax. It was a penalty tax of rupees 57,612/- for years of 1935-6 despite AISA’s claim of being a non-profit organization.

Khadi and social reform got inadvertently intertwined. R.B. Gregg said Khadi provided one elemental security and - it tended immediately to develop the moral qualities of the people: hope, initiative, perseverance, self-reliance, self-respect.178

In the villages where Khadi work took foothold, the activists also initiated anti-liquor and sanitation campaigns. Spinning venture aided in forging bonds between activists and villagers. Village reform movement almost always arrived in the wake of Khadi work in a particular village. An ashram at Vedchhi, a village in the Surat district of Gujarat, strengthened anti-drink movement through Khadi organization. In 1926, it was reported that some 800 persons were spinning because of its initiative.179 A venture in spinning also brought many other trades such as carpentry, carding etc., along.

178 Gregg, R.B., Economics of Khaddar, p.153
179 Notes: Self-purification among Chodhras, Navajivan, June 27 1926, (CWMG vol.31, 58)
The work of the AISA by 1946 had spread over the whole of India. It had 19 branches and 900 production centres covering some 50,000 villages. Its sale organisations employed nearly 4000 men and who operated mostly in towns and cities. There were about 300 sale depots in all. During the last 20 years of its work the Association had given employment to more than three lakhs spinners and about 50,000 weavers and had distributed 7 crores of rupees as wages among villagers. The wages paid were 6 annas and Re.1-80 per spinner and weaver respectively, for an eight-hour day. The annual output stood at one crore square yards and the sales about one crore. Total output of khadi under AISA was, however, negligible in comparison with the nation’s output of mill cloth.

Despite the spreading links and deepening roots, there were widespread belief that the AISA would down shutters once Gandhi was mortally removed. Economists were skeptical of Gandhi’s effort. Many of Gandhi’s opponents went so far as to sarcastically remark that Gandhi’s mortal remains would be cremated with the wooden frames of so many of the discarded Charkhas. It was one man’s obsession that would have lived through by the time Gandhi was dead. Contrary to such impressions, Gandhi refused to concede that Charkha would disappear with his own earthly disappearance. He hoped that other members of AISA would reciprocate his ‘matchless faith in Khadi’. While asserting that destruction is the law of nature, he scarcely believed that the country would dump Khadi after his demise. ‘I do not find a single sign to suggest that khadi work will totally disappear from the country.’ Instead, he saw signs of increasing faith in Khadi. There were people, independent-minded and who had sacrificed their all on the altar of khadi, who would not allow the AISA to be wound up, he said. It could be possible that the AISA might one day cease to function but it would not be unceremonious end. Its identity could be merged into a bigger entity. ‘Destruction as such is no evil. The destruction of an activity which is sacred is as good as a revolution.’ Further, being a donor-driven organization, the AISA could not be wound up without their permission. In its 56th meeting, held in October 1946, it was mooted that AISA hand over all Khadi production and sales work to people’s institution and itself confine to auditing duties. It was not done. Ten

---

180 About the Charkha Sangh, Navajivan, November 11 1927, (CWMG vol.35, 279)
years later however, AISA was wound up and merged with a larger Gandhian organization called Serva Seva Sangh.

Conclusion

'I am a man possessed by an idea', Gandhi spoke to Louis Fisher at Sevagram in the first week of June, 1942, just before his 'Quit India' call. 'If such a man cannot get an organisation, he becomes an organisation', he claimed. The All India Spinners' Association (AISA) was borne out of the obsession of one man; its creation and career embodied Gandhi's ideological conviction and passionate perseverance. His opponents were many and their snipes were tasteless but in some tragic way their prediction proved truer than Gandhi's optimism. Among his opponents there was a widespread belief that the AISA would bring shutters down once Gandhi was mortally removed. Some five years after he was assassinated, the inevitable did happen. Organizationally it was dead and yet, the idea survived.

If Khadi was to spread it could only be through the decentralized channels. All India Spinners' Association founded in late 1925 was an effort towards the creation of a decentralized network. Gandhi called it a purely philanthropic initiative. One factor that catalyzed the establishment of AISA was lack of suitable workers in the service of Khadi. AISA was a remedial measure for the existing problems of managing the subscription yarn too. AISA attempted to establish a permanent agency manned by dedicated and trained workers. From the perspective of voluntary work, with all the limitations that such work entails, AISA's achievement was significant. The initiatives of AISA are significant precedents for voluntary sector. Even while it professed to be a philanthropic enterprise it was run like any other commercial firm. To a degree it succeeded in fusing discipline of commerce and sentiments of philanthropy together. But what in its early days was its crucial contribution, in later phase came to stultify its growth.

181 Fischer, Louis, A Week with Gandhi, 1944, p.27.
Total khadi production and sales conducted by AISA and Certified Organisations (CWMG vol. From 1924-48) are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Production (CWMG vol.in Rs.)</th>
<th>Production (CWMG vol.in Yg)</th>
<th>Sales (CWMG vol.in Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>19,03,034</td>
<td></td>
<td>33,61,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>23,76,670</td>
<td>2,29,56,140</td>
<td>28,99,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>24,06,370</td>
<td></td>
<td>33,48,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>24,16,382</td>
<td></td>
<td>33,08,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>31,55,437</td>
<td>62,61,812</td>
<td>39,49,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>54,91,610</td>
<td>1,16,76,930</td>
<td>66,19,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>72,15,502</td>
<td>1,75,76,576</td>
<td>90,94,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>44,87,195</td>
<td>1,15,03,886</td>
<td>58,12,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>38,68,810</td>
<td>1,02,24,344</td>
<td>51,75,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>34,06,380</td>
<td>95,80,986</td>
<td>46,67,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>32,44,105</td>
<td>84,61,737</td>
<td>46,90,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>24,28,257</td>
<td>62,23,697</td>
<td>34,47,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>30,15,339</td>
<td>72,69,877</td>
<td>45,32,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>54,99,486</td>
<td>1,25,59,594</td>
<td>54,98,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>48,29,610</td>
<td>1,08,95,608</td>
<td>64,13,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>51,36,983</td>
<td>95,51,438</td>
<td>77,62,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>1,20,02,430</td>
<td>2,15,84,076</td>
<td>1,49,85,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>78,62,368</td>
<td>1,00,45,214</td>
<td>1,07,90,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>1,27,52,233</td>
<td>1,08,80,739</td>
<td>1,32,61,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>1,34,58,069</td>
<td>1,02,63,903</td>
<td>1,67,87,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>70,63,219</td>
<td>51,76,995</td>
<td>1,04,86,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>1,05,68,870</td>
<td>70,05,473</td>
<td>1,11,95,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>65,74,389</td>
<td>43,51,646</td>
<td>72,46,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,11,63,048</td>
<td>21,41,40,674</td>
<td>16,53,35,074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charkha Sangh Ka Itihaas, p.320.
The following is the graphic presentation of the above figures: