

# KHADI : A Symbol of Nationalism

As proposed by Mahatma Gandhi

## Introductory Note<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji presented khadi as a symbol of nationalism, equality and self-reliance. It was his belief that reconstruction of the society and effective Satyagraha against the foreign rule can be possible only through khadi.

Khadi is the central core of the constructive activities as recommended by him. According to him there could be no swaraj without universal and voluntary acceptance of khadi. In his words, "I am a salesman of swaraj. I am a devotee of khadi. It is my duty to induce people, by every honest means, to wear khadi."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji started his movement for khadi in 1918. His emphasis at first was on khadi as providing relief to our poverty- stricken masses. But one finds a change in his emphasis from 1934, more especially from 1935, when he began on insisting on khadi for the villager's own use, rather than merely for sale to others. His imprisonment in 1942 and 1943 gave him time to ponder further over his khadi movement, and when he came out of jail he came with a determination to give a new turn to khadi work in order to make khadi serve the needs of villagers themselves first and foremost. He poured out his soul to his fellow-workers in 1944, and urged them to effect the change.<sup>2</sup>

The spinning wheel was at one time the symbol of India's poverty and backwardness. Gandhiji turned it into a symbol of self-reliance and non-violence. Khadi enabled him to carry his message of swadeshi and swaraj to the people and to establish connection with them.

## What is Khadi?

Khadi means handspun and handwoven cloth. In 1918 Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khadi as relief programme for the poor masses living in India's villages. Spinning and weaving was elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and selfgovernment. Every village shall plant and harvest its own raw-materials for yarn, every woman and man shall engage in spinning

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## <sup>1</sup> References

- a. Navajivan, 26-4-1925; 26:548
- b. M.K. Gandhi, Khadi: Why and How, ed. Bharatan Kumarappa, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1955, Editor's note, p.v.

and every village shall weave whatever is needed for its own use. In the first half of this century, and in many parts even now, farmers have not enough work to earn their living through out the year. About four months they may be idle due to the rainless dry season. Spinning would thereby supply the readiest occupation; it can easily be learnt. It requires practically no outlay or capital, even an improved spinning wheel can be easily and cheaply made. Gandhi saw it as the end of dependency on foreign materials (symbolizing foreign rule) and thus giving a first lesson or real independence. Raw materials at that time were entirely exported to England and then re-imported as costly finished cloth, depriving the local population of work and profits on it. Gandhi also felt that in a county where manual labor was looked down upon, it was an occupation to bring high and low, rich and poor together, to show them the dignity of hand-labor. He asked not only of those in need, but of every person to do spinning at least about one hour per day as sacrifice to his county, as duty towards the poor. He hoped for a certain bond of unity between the classes and masses by bridging the gap with a common occupation, and he saw great social value in hand-spinning. It was for economic, cultural and social reasons and not merely political that Gandhi established the Khadi Movement. In 1934-35 he expanded the idea from helping the poor individual to self-reliance of whole villages. In 1942-43 he had sessions with workers groups and village organizers to re-organize the whole programme on a bigger country-wide scale. Thus Khadi is not mere a piece of cloth but a way of life.

I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor there is God also. I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel.<sup>2</sup>

The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the Charkha. The Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and the solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the Charkha included all the anterior and posterior industries- ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy. The Charkha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self contained. With the exit of Charkha went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took the place of these industries. Therefore the villagers were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these bought them. The industrialized countries of the West were exploiting other nations. India is herself an exploited country. Hence, if the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the Charkha and all it means.<sup>3</sup>

Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of other

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<sup>2</sup> (*Young India*, 20-5-1926)

<sup>3</sup> (*Harijan*, 13-4-1940)

industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village must be touched at all points.<sup>4</sup>

I claim that in losing the spinning wheel we lost our left lung. We are therefore suffering from galloping consumption. The restoration of the wheel arrests the progress of the fell disease. There are certain things which all must do in certain climes... The spinning wheel is the thing which all must turn in the Indian clime for the transition stage at any rate and the vast majority must for all time.<sup>5</sup>

The wearer of Khadi from a Swadeshi standpoint is like a man making use of his lungs. A natural and obligatory act has got to be performed, whether others do it out of impure motives or refrain altogether because they do not believe in its necessity or utility.<sup>6</sup>

Charkha is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and therefore freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of goodwill and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world's peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curse of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love. And with all that, inasmuch as the loss of it brought about India's slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom.<sup>7</sup>

If we have the 'khadi spirit' in us, we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. The 'khadi spirit' means illimitable patience. For those who know anything about the production of khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patience while we are spinning 'the thread of Swaraj'. The 'khadi spirit' means also an equally illimitable faith. Even as the spinner toiling away at the yarn he spins by itself small enough, put in the aggregate, would be enough to clothe every human being in India, so must we have illimitable faith in truth and non-violence ultimately conquering every obstacle in our way.

The 'khadi spirit' means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures, and if we but cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our countrymen, what a land this India of ours would be! And the

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<sup>4</sup> (*Harijan*, 16-11-1934)

<sup>5</sup> (*Young India*, 13-10-1921)

<sup>6</sup> (*Young India*, 1-9-1921)

<sup>7</sup> (*Young India*, 8-12-1921)

more I move about the country and the more I see the things for myself, the richer, the stronger is my faith growing in the capacity of the spinning wheel.<sup>8</sup>

Khadi is only seemingly expensive. I have pointed out that it is wrong to compare khadi with other cloth by comparing the prices of given lengths. The inexpensiveness 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.<sup>9</sup>

Khadi stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of the yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and the most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery. Khadi delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. It restores to the poor somewhat of what the rich have taken from them.<sup>10</sup>

The mission of khadi is not merely to supply the townspeople with fashionable khadi that will vie with the mill manufacturers and thus like other industries supply a few artisans with employment, but it is to become a supplementary industry to agriculture. This mission still remains unfulfilled.

In order that it may fulfill this mission, it has to be self-sustained and its use must spread in the villages. Just as the villagers cook their own roti or rice, so must they make their own khadi for personal use. The surplus, if any, they may sell.<sup>11</sup>

A country remains poor in wealth, both materially and intellectually, if it does not develop its handicrafts and its industries and lives a lazy parasitic life by importing all the manufactured articles from outside. There was a time when we manufactured almost all we wanted. The process is now reversed, and we are dependent upon the outside world for most manufactured goods. The past year brought forth a remarkable awakening of the Swadeshi spirit. It has therefore become necessary to define Swadeshi goods. But in giving a definition care had to be taken not to make the definition so narrow as to make manufacture all but impossible or so wide as to become farcical and Swadeshi only in name. We do not want to follow the frog-in-the-well

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<sup>8</sup> (*Young India*, 22-9-1927)

<sup>9</sup> (*Young India*, 7-8-1924)

<sup>10</sup> (*Young India*, 17-3-1927)

<sup>11</sup> (*Harijan*, 6-7-1935)

policy, nor in seeming to be international, lose our roots. We cannot be international, if we lose our individuality, i. e., nationality.<sup>12</sup>

It is not enough to say that hand-spinning is one of the industries to be revived. It is necessary to insist that it is the central industry that must engage our attention if we are to re-establish the village home.<sup>13</sup>

It is my claim that as soon as we have completed the boycott of foreign cloth we shall have evolved so far that we shall necessarily give up the present absurdities and remodel national life in keeping with the ideal of simplicity and domesticity implanted in the bosom of the masses. We will not then be dragged into an imperialism which is built upon exploitation of the weaker races of the earth, and the acceptance of a giddy materialistic civilization protected by naval and air forces that have made peaceful living almost impossible. On the contrary we shall then refine that imperialism into a commonwealth of nations which will combine, if they do, for the purpose of giving their best to the world and of protecting, not by brute force but by self-suffering, the weaker nations or races of the earth. Non-cooperation aims at nothing less than this revolution in the thought world. Such a transformation can come only after the complete success of the spinning wheel. India can become fit for delivering such a message, when she has become proof against temptation and therefore attacks from outside, by becoming self-contained regarding two of her chief needs-food and clothing.<sup>14</sup>

Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbour the grain-dealer starve for want of custom.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> (*Young India*, 20-8-1931)

<sup>13</sup> (*Young India*, 30-9-1926)

<sup>14</sup> (*Young India*, 29-6-1921)

<sup>15</sup> (*Young India*, 13-10-1921)

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes and every village must repossess its own weaver.<sup>16</sup>

There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. The fine fabric that we import from the west or the Far East has literally killed millions of our brothers and sisters, and delivered thousands of our dear sisters to a life of shame. True art must be evidence of happiness, contentment and purity of its authors. And if you will have such art revived in our midst, the use of khadi is obligatory on the best of you at the present moment.<sup>17</sup>

India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the west, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live. She must not, therefore, lazily and helplessly say, 'I cannot escape the onrush from the west.' She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.<sup>18</sup>

"Do spin and spin after due deliberation. Let those who spin wear khaddar and let no one who wears (khadi) fail to spin. 'Due deliberation' means realization that charkha or act of spinning is the symbol of non-violence. Ponder; it will be self-evident."<sup>19</sup>

### Advantages of Khdi

- » Provides employment and hence food to poor people who spin and weave Khadi cloth.
- » It is made of cotton, so farmers get money
- » It is eco-friendly
- » It is porous and made of cotton, so healthful.
- » Austere, simple. Hence it is a statement about your lifestyle and values.
- » Connects you to freedom movement, to Gandhi and to all those who believe in his values.
- » Khadi gives food to hungry stomachs and your dress becomes a flag of the values you cherish.

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<sup>16</sup> (*Young India*, 21-7-1920)

<sup>17</sup> (*Young India*, 11-8-1921)

<sup>18</sup> (*Young India*, 7-10-1926)

<sup>19</sup> (28-3-1945, *Sevagram*)

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has developed an innovative spinning wheel, which apart from spinning yarn also generates electricity sufficient to energize rural homes for 7-8 hours.

Mahatma Gandhi promoted Charkha (the spinning wheel) during freedom struggle as a symbol of self-reliance and source of income for the rural population.

It is after more than six decades of independence that the KVIC thought of the dual use of the spinning wheel.

It was acute electricity shortage in Indian villages that inspired the making of e-charkha (spinning wheel).

A follower of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy Ekambar Nath has designed the e-charkha. It has a hand driven spinning wheel and the attached battery gets charged while operating the wheel.

The spinning of thread on e-charkha for two hours charges the battery for eight hours.

K. Mohan Rao, State Director, KVIC, Andhra Pradesh said the effort is to replace the old charkha with new e-charkhas so that the villages could become self-sufficient in generation of electricity.

Stress is that wherever old spinning wheels are they should be replaced by e-charkhas (the electronic spinning wheel), so that simultaneous benefit of generation of power in the remote villages will go down to the spinners, said Rao.

These e-charkhas are distributed free of cost under a scheme "Funds for Regeneration of Traditional Industries" SFURTI sponsored by the Central government.

This has made the inhabitants of Hyderabad like Jehangir immune to the frequent and long cuts in electricity supply.

After the coming of e-charkha's we can generate electricity while spinning. In villages where there is no electricity using an e-charkha could solve the problem. If one spins an e-charkha for two hours it charges the battery sufficient to last for eight hours. Now when the battery is charged one can work at night also. There are provisions for entertainment attached to this e-charkha as well. One can listen to a transistor or charge a mobile while spinning the charkha, said Jehangir, a resident.

Officials of the KVIC said that each e-charkha costs approximately 9,000 rupees. Currently, Andhra Pradesh has 200 e-charkhas. (ANI)

Let Us Propagate Khadi

"Using khadi is the foundation of swadeshi, since khadi is the only thing which can be made from thick yarn, and made easily. It has not so far had to compete with machine-made cloth. The consumption of khadi alone enables lakhs of poor people to earn an honest living, staying at home."<sup>20</sup>

". . . boycott of foreign cloth by means of hand-spinning and hand weaving, i.e., khaddar, not only saves the peasant's money, but it enables us workers to render social service of a first class order. It brings us into direct touch with the villagers. It enables us to give them real political education and teach them to become self-sustained and self-reliant. Organization of khaddar is thus infinitely better than co-operative societies or any other form of village organization."<sup>21</sup>

"It is but natural that at this time when a determined effort is made to spread the khadi movement in Maha Gujarat we should require a large number of volunteers. We need both part-time volunteers and full-time volunteers. It is essential that every volunteer should know all the processes connected with spinning. Any persons who wish to offer their services as such volunteers may send their names to me, so that as and when the need arises their services may be utilized."<sup>22</sup>

"As regards charkha and khaddar, charkha is the life of Hindustan and I have compared it to the *Sudarshan Chakra* and *Kamdhenu*. The destruction of charkha meant the beginning of poverty in India, and to drive (away) poverty we must reinstate charkha in its proper place. Charkha should be given the first place in Indian homes. Let the wheel be plied in every home every day for half an hour in the name of God for the salvation of his or her starving brothers. The educated people should first adopt it so that others may follow."<sup>23</sup>

"You will go stark naked rather than that you should wear anything that is not hand-spun by your sister and hand-woven by your brother in your home and not in the factory. That is the message of the spinning-wheel. That is the simple little demand I make of every man and woman who loves India and who wants freedom of India."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> (Navajivan, 8-2-1920; 17:16.)

<sup>21</sup> (Young India, 26-12-1924; 25:474.)

<sup>22</sup> (Navajivan, 1-2-1925; 26:62.)

<sup>23</sup> Speech at All-Bengal Hindu Sammelan, on 2-5-1925; 27:10-11.)

<sup>24</sup> Speech at Bengal Provincial Conference, Faridpur, on 3-5-1925; 27:34.)



"I feel that the spinning wheel has all the virtues needed to make one's life truthful, pure and peaceful and fill it with the spirit of service. I, therefore, beg of you all to give half an hour's labour daily in the form of spinning."<sup>25</sup>

"Where there is a will there is a way. The only thing needful is that there should be a determination not to desert khadi no matter what it costs. But, if your faith in khadi has slackened, you should tell me so. I have warned friends repeatedly that if in their experience they find khadi to be an impracticable proposition, they must not hesitate to say so first to me if they will and then to the public. I have no desire to bolster up a wrong cause no matter what grief it may give to me personally. As a matter of fact it will be no grief to me but unmixed joy to discover my error. No friend therefore need spare me when he finds that my faith in khadi is like building castles in the air. But, if your faith is as green as when you wrote your essay then you dare not desert khadi."<sup>26</sup>

"It is my firm belief that, even for the sake of khadi, no khadi lover should give up his principles, resort to incorrect behaviour, or ever have recourse to evil ways even with the best of intentions. Nothing good can ever be accomplished through unclean means. The power that we look for in khadi will be completely destroyed if we resort to undesirable means in our work. The annihilation of the distinction between high and low is a glorious result of khadi."<sup>27</sup>

"The two issues of khadi and political organization should be kept absolutely separate. There must be no confusion. The aim of khadi is humanitarian; but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.

"The Salvation Army wants to teach people about God. But they come with bread. For the poor, bread is their God. Similarly, we should bring food into the mouths of the people through khadi. If we succeed in breaking the idleness of the people through khadi, they will begin to listen to us. Whatever else the Government might do, it does leave some food for the villagers.

Unless we can bring food to them, why should the people listen to us? When we have taught them what they can do through their own efforts, then they will want to listen to us.

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<sup>25</sup> Speech to students, Dinajpur, on 21-5-1925; 27:93.)

<sup>26</sup> Letter written to N.S. Varadachari from Sabarmati Ashram on 13-6-1926; 30:576.)

<sup>27</sup> (Navajivan, 31-10-1929; 42:78.)

"That trust can best be generated through khadi. While working out the khadi programme our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is, economic. We should leave out all political considerations whatsoever. But it is bound to produce important political consequences which nobody can prevent and nobody need deplore . . .

. . . But through khadi we teach people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. This is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful khadi work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketing may easily be violent; through the use of khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent."<sup>28</sup>

"But khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. . .

". . . Naturally, they can have nothing to do with politics or political parties. The Congress, in my opinion, did well in making both the Associations autonomous and wholly non-political. All parties and all communities can combine to uplift the villages economically, morally and hygienically."<sup>29</sup>

"Khadi cannot be moved from its central place. Khadi will be the sun of the whole industrial solar system. All the other industries will receive warmth and sustenance from the khadi industry."<sup>30</sup>

"The charkha understood intelligently can spin not only economic salvation but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts and demonstrate to us that the non-violent approach to swaraj is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run."<sup>31</sup>

"I have often said that if khadi is a sound economic proposition it is also a science and a romance. I believe there is a book called *The Romance of Cotton* wherein the origin of cotton has been traced and an attempt made to show how its discovery altered the course of civilization. Everything can be turned into a science or a romance if there is a scientific or a romantic spirit behind it. Some people scoff at khadi and betray signs of impatience or disgust when one talks of hand-spinning. But it ceases to be an object of disgust or ridicule immediately you attribute to it

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<sup>28</sup> An interview with Nirmal Kumar Bose on 9/10-11-1934; 59:316-317.)

<sup>29</sup> (Harijan, 16-11-1934; 59:357.)

<sup>30</sup> Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh on or before 30-11-1934; 59:411.)

<sup>31</sup> Speech at exhibition ground, Faizpur, 27-12-1936; 64:195.)

the power of removing India-wide idleness, unemployment and consequent pauperism. It need not be, as a matter of fact, a panacea for the three ills. To be absorbingly interesting, the mere honest attributing of power is enough."<sup>32</sup>

"The Working Committee has emphasized the necessity of the members of the Legislatures and other workers taking the constructive programme of 1920 to the three crore villagers between whom and their representatives a direct contact has been established. The representatives may if they choose neglect them, or give them some paltry or even substantial relief from financial burdens; but they cannot give them self-confidence, dignity and the power of continuously bettering their own position unless they will interest them in the fourfold constructive programme, i.e., universal production and use of khadi through universal hand-spinning, Hindu-Muslim or rather communal unity, promotion of total prohibition by propaganda among those who are addicted to the drink habit, and removal by Hindus of untouchability root and branch.

"It was announced in 1920 and 1921 from a thousand platforms that attainment of swaraj by the non-violent method was impossible without these four things. I hold that it is not less true today.

"It is one thing to improve the economic condition of the masses by State regulation of taxation, and wholly another for them to feel that they have bettered their condition by their own sole personal effort. Now this they can only do through hand-spinning and other village handicrafts."<sup>33</sup>

"I claim to be a satyagrahi. Such a one does not tell a lie. Whether one describes a single thing as two or a hundred thousand, both involve falsehood. How then did I, a satyagrahi, make such a statement? After so many years I have again started repeating the same thing. Khadi can bring swaraj only if we are convinced of the principle underlying it. Swaraj cannot be won just by donning khadi without any understanding."<sup>34</sup>

"As long as power has not come into the hands of the people or as long as the State has not adopted it, khadi will have to depend on voluntary contributions. Khadi cannot be propagated in any other way."<sup>35</sup>

"My idea is that in a well-organized village one person should suffice. For example, one worker may devote two hours to taking in yarn, distributing slivers and spinning tools, and sales of khadi; village industry work might take even less, and the remainder of the time he could give to village uplift and general education. This has not till now been possible because the khadi workers' time has been devoted to teaching people how to spin, etc. But now the time has come when khadi and village products, locally produced, must also be locally absorbed. In that case one person will be able to do all the work. Today it suffices to say that all this work is complementary - and must become one as far as possible."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> (Harijan, 16-1-1937; 64:248-49.)

<sup>33</sup> (Harijan, 15-5-1937; 65:199.)

<sup>34</sup> (Harijan Sevak, 26-2-1938; 66:372.)

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Vithaldas Jerajani, 6-9-1940; 72:446.)

<sup>36</sup> (Harijan, 31-5-1942; 76:38.)

"We should increase our love for khadi and serve the villages. You should make all your dependents khadi wearers.

"I have compared khadi to the sun and the other industries to the planets in the solar system. Agriculture is a planet in this solar system but it cannot be the sun, for agriculture is not free. Those who till the land do not own it. The Government controls it through petty officials. The people have lost self-confidence. Harmful customs have led to fragmentation of land."<sup>37</sup>

## Economic Return

"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."<sup>38</sup>

"To have good slivers, it is certainly essential that the cotton should have been properly carded but it is also necessary that the rolling of slivers should be done with equal care. If in making a sliver the fibre is merely rolled into a cylindrical shape anyhow, even well-carded cotton will be wasted.

"If cotton is spread out evenly on a hollow board and, with a thin stick placed over it, rolled with one's palm five or six times, the fibres get stretched out properly and form a roll to make a fine sliver. Only the person who spins with such a sliver knows the pleasure that spinning gives. If one or two more turns are given with the palm, the result will be still better. On the contrary, if only one or two turns are given, the sliver so made will not yield a well-twisted and even thread in spinning. In such slivers the fibres just stick together somehow and the thread, therefore, can never be even."<sup>39</sup>

"Hand-woven cloth made of hand-spun yarn is of course khadi, however fine it may be. It may be made of cotton, silk or even of wool. One should wear whichever of these one happens to find convenient. The khadi from Andhra is very fine. In Assam, one can get some khadi made of silk.

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<sup>37</sup> Speech at A.I.S.A. meeting, Sevagram, 25-3-1945; 79:304.)

<sup>38</sup> (Young India, 7-8-1924; 24:525.)

<sup>39</sup> (Navajivan, 3-5-1925; 27:24-5.)

Woollen khadi is made in Kathiawar. In other words, the only criterion of khadi is its being hand-spun and hand-woven. Ordinarily, hand-spun khadi is found to be coarse and thick, hence, some people erroneously believe that khadi can only be of this type, though in fact fine khadi of sixty to eighty count yarn is also made. Nevertheless, those who have used thick khadi know that the touch of coarse rough khadi is soft to the body and, being rough, it affords better protection to the skin."<sup>40</sup>

"The manager of the Khadi Bhandar, Princess Street, run in Bombay by the All-India Khadi Board (now All-India Spinners' Association) has sent me a copy of his neatly printed price list. It shows the progress made by khaddar. The total sales during the four years of its existence amount to Rs. 8,30,329. The highest sales were in 1922-23, viz., Rs. 2,45,515, the lowest during the current year, viz., Rs. 1,68,280. It has been suggested that the sales went up in 1922-23 because I was in jail. People thought and rightly that the more khaddar they used the nearer was swaraj. And swaraj meant my discharge. The flaw, however, consisted in the reasoning that khaddar was only a temporary necessity. Whereas, the fact is that it is as necessary for all times as native food and native air are."<sup>41</sup>

"I once more urge the workers in every province to be prompt in their returns. If the All-India Spinners' Association is to become an efficient organization covering every village of India, it must have the disciplined and intelligent co-operation of all its workers."<sup>42</sup>

"The remarkable fact about the growing cheapness of khadi is that generally the reduction in prices has not meant a corresponding reduction in wages of carders, spinners and weavers, but has been due to better knowledge and greater efficiency."<sup>43</sup>

"In my opinion, by honest and able organization, we can create a universal demand for khadi,

(a) if those who are engaged in khadi production will pay attention to the manufacture of stronger and more even yarn equal at least to the mill-spun yarn;

(b) if they will also study the tastes of the people and produce sufficient variety of khadi;

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<sup>40</sup> (Navajivan, 25-10-1925; 28:386.)

<sup>41</sup> (*Young India*, 12-11-1925; 28:446.)

<sup>42</sup> (*Young India*, 27-5-1926; 30:486.)

<sup>43</sup> (*Young India*, 18-11-1926; 32:60.)

- (c) if by efficiency in other directions they bring down the price of khadi;
- (d) if those who are engaged in the distribution of khadi will gain greater knowledge of the tastes of the people and will learn the art of selling;
- (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."<sup>44</sup>

"Indeed the economic and the philanthropic side of khadi is so overwhelmingly important that it is a wonder that Rajas and Maharajas have not given the movement the support that it deserves. Everybody agrees that millions of villagers require a supplementary occupation. Scores of paper schemes are being hawked about the country for achieving village reconstruction. But not one scheme has the universal application that khadi has. And so far as I am aware, not one scheme is being tried on the scale that khadi is being tried. It is not a small achievement to be able to show that the khadi scheme is at work in at least 1,500 villages."<sup>45</sup>

"Not everyone can run a khadi bhandar successfully, not even everyone who has been in charge of a cloth shop. A manager of a khadi bhandar should know the different varieties of khadi, and should know how to distinguish between genuine khadi and imitations. He should also know the art of presenting khadi to the public in an inviting manner, and above all, he has to be scrupulously honest."<sup>46</sup>

"To pay cash for khadi that the people want is the least protection that khadi is entitled to. Managers of sale depots must not be afraid of losing custom if they do not give credit. They must rely upon their ability to carry on propaganda in their neighbourhood in favour of khadi for commanding cash sales."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> (Young India, 21-4-1927; 33:248.)

<sup>45</sup> (Young India, 30-6-1927; 34:78.)

<sup>46</sup> (Young India, 11-8-1927; 34:310.)

<sup>47</sup> (Young India, 7-6-1928; 36:371.)

"We must distribute production and centralize sales for the time being. We must try the experiment of pooling prices of khadi produced in various centres to bring down the average. Look at the figures of mill khadi... What does it indicate? A revolution in the people's taste. They are prepared to make a sacrifice. They ask for coarse cloth. But they are being foully deceived by the millowners who do not hesitate to exploit their patriotic sentiment."<sup>48</sup>

"Khaddar is not dear at any price. If a man dear and near to you is imprisoned, will you not try your utmost to set him free at any cost? A spirit of sacrifice is necessary if you want to attain swaraj. Khaddar should be used with the spirit of sacrifice. In saying that khaddar is dear, it means that you want swaraj without any price. Foreign cloth is cheap, you say. Even if it is a free gift it is not worth having. Behind it there is the evil of your bondage and your weakness. Get rid of it and depend on your own self for your clothing."<sup>49</sup>

"Khadi as conceived for the use of millions does not cost more than foreign cloth for the simple reason that the millions must, if khadi is to be used by them, be their own manufacturers and consumers. These pages have shown that in Bardoli, Bijolia and several other places khadi is being so manufactured and consumed even as in millions of homes people cook and eat their own food. It is possible to demonstrate, in terms of metal, that rice or bread cooked in a few factories would cost less than they cost today in the millions of homes. But nobody on that account would dare suggest that the millions should cease to cook and should send their raw rice and wheat to be cooked in centralized factories."<sup>50</sup>

"If, I can have my way and if people co-operate, khadi will always be sold at a fixed price. The price of cotton may vary, but if the women who spin and the weavers are paid at uniform rates in their respective provinces and the rates of payment for the other processes are also uniform, there should be no difficulty in having a fixed price for every variety of khadi. Since we do not possess the requisite honesty, efficiency of organization and sympathy for the poor, the prices of khadi have been changing. However, anyone who takes the slightest interest in khadi knows that in every province the prices have declined from what they were ten years ago. . .

". . . The quality of spinning has improved and, in consequence, the weavers' work has become easier. This has made it possible to reduce the rate of payment to weavers without reducing their

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<sup>48</sup> (Young India, 27-12-1928; 38:246.)

<sup>49</sup> (The Hindu, 27-4-1929; 40:278.)

<sup>50</sup> (Young India, 19-12-1929; 42:292.)

total earnings. It has been possible to bring about this happy result of reduction in prices because a philanthropic body is organizing khadi work. Thanks to this fact, the quality of khadi has progressively improved and the prices have come down. There is considerable scope for still further improvement in quality. . ."<sup>51</sup>

"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, involving sometimes a war to the knife between these different ideas. There can be no room for such conflict within a business organization. Imagine parties, groups and the like in a business concern. It must break to pieces under their weight. But a khadi organization is more than a business concern. It is a philanthropic institution designed to serve demos. Such an institution cannot be governed by popular fancy. There is no room in it for personal ambition."<sup>52</sup>

"The moral is obvious: the simpler the khadi, the larger the amount that goes into the pockets of the poorest workers. The fancy work no doubt makes khadi popular in homes which could not otherwise look at it. I may add also that there are some popular varieties of saris and dhotis manufactured for poor people. On these no management charges are at all added. And there is no such thing as net profit in any of the numerous stores managed by the A.I.S.A. The management charges are added in order to make khadi self-supporting."<sup>53</sup>

"There is no reason why a spinner in Bihar should get less than her sister in Gujarat. No doubt prices vary in different provinces because the standard of living varies. But the Association cannot afford to take things as they are. It has to change them, if they are unjust. There is no reason why the price of one hour's labour in spinning should be less than one in weaving. There is more skill involved in spinning than in simple weaving. Simple weaving is a purely mechanical process. Simplest spinning requires the cunning of the hand. Yet the spinner gets one pie per hour against the weaver's minimum of six; the carder too does better, almost as well as the weaver. There are historical reasons for this state of things. But they are not just merely

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<sup>51</sup> (Navajivan, 7-6-1931; 46:341.)

<sup>52</sup> (Harijan, 21-9-1934; 58:353.)

<sup>53</sup> (Harijan, 12-10-1934; 59:166.)



because they are historical. Time has come for the Association to equalize if not also to stabilize the prices of all labour regulated by it."<sup>54</sup>

"The custom for fine khadi has fallen off even before the expected or rather threatened rise in prices. When it falls further, if it does, it will do so not because of the rise in prices but undoubtedly because of want of love or humanity in the buyer. Humanity does not search for low prices in a spirit of bargain.

The humane in man, even in his purchases, seeks opportunities of service, and therefore wants to know first not the price of the article of purchase but the condition of its producers, and makes purchases in a manner that serves most the most needy and deserving."<sup>55</sup>

"The efficiency earnings do not directly affect the sale price. If anything, the efficiency of spinners improves the quality of khadi. The direct increase in the wages undoubtedly raises the prices, but its burden is broken by the improvement in quality. Then the increase is so judiciously regulated as to affect the poorest buyer not at all or very slightly. I have no manner of doubt that if only the workers will themselves be more efficient, more vigilant and more faithful, they will hasten the day when spinners can easily earn eight annas per day of eight hours' work without involving a phenomenal rise in the sale price. More scientific knowledge must improve the capacity of hand-gins, carding-bows and spinning-wheels."<sup>56</sup>

"City people should know that ceaseless effort is being made to evoke greater skill among the artisans so that the whole of the increase in the wages may not fall upon khadi. Overhead charges are also being constantly reduced. Skill overhead increases with experience. But sixteen times increase in the wages of spinners cannot all be brought about merely by increased efficiency. Therefore some rise in the price of khadi is inevitable with the increase in the wages. This is being unequally distributed among the different varieties so that the heaviest rise will take place in the khadi that is purchased by the monied classes. Everything that can be done to ease the burden on poor buyers is being done and will be done by the Association.

"But khadi-wearers should know that the economics of khadi are different from the ordinary economics which are based on competition in which patriotism, sentiment and humanity play little or no part. Khadi economics are based on patriotism sentiment and humanity. . .

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<sup>54</sup> (Harijan, 6-7-1935; 61:233.)

<sup>55</sup> (Harijan, 2-11-1935; 62:85-86.)

<sup>56</sup> (Harijan, 17-4-1937; 65:90-91.)

"The question of cheapness mainly affects the city-dwellers. If all of them, rich and poor, took to khadi, they could hardly use more than ten per cent of the possible production of khadi. The rest has to be used by the producers themselves who are villagers. The question of price does not affect them materially, if at all. It is true that khadi has not penetrated the villages to the extent expected. During the transition period, therefore, it has to depend upon the patriotic spirit of city-dwellers both rich and poor. Those who believe in the message of khadi will not consider any price too dear for khadi. It is the only real insurance against famine and unemployment."<sup>57</sup>

". . . what I wish to consider here is the reason for the sales not keeping pace with the production. Propaganda undoubtedly has its place. But more than propaganda is wanted scientific research. There is no doubt that our people use on an average 15 yards of cloth per head per year. There is no doubt that this cloth costs the country a figure approaching 100 crores of rupees, meaning less than three rupees per head, counting India's population at 35 crores. It is easy enough to say that the sales can be effected if the State protects khadi. That khadi deserves protection is in my opinion a self-proved proposition. But have the khadi workers who have the qualifications found out whether we have done all we could to command sales even without protection? . . .

"It is a shame that we who grow more cotton than we need should have to send it abroad for being turned into cloth for us. It is equally a shame for us that we who have in our villages unlimited unused labour, and can easily supply ourselves with village instruments of manufacture, should send our cotton to the mills of our cities for it to be manufactured into cloth for our use. We know the history of the shame. But we have not yet discovered the sure way to deal with the double shame beyond a patriotic appeal to the public."<sup>58</sup>

"I have not hesitated to say, and I wish to repeat, that everyone who spins for waraj brings waraj nearer by so many yards. Think what it means if millions were to take part in this grand effort. Let no one seek for a parallel in history. History has no record of a non-violent effort made for a nation's freedom. *Bona fide* non-violent effort presupposes the adoption of unique weapons. It is the violence within the breast and the newness of the technique which stand in the way of an appreciation of the charkha."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> (Harijan, 23-7-1938; 67:198-99.)

<sup>58</sup> (Harijan, 26-8-1939; 70:104-105.)

<sup>59</sup> (Harijan, 10-2-1940; 71:183.)

"To understand the inner meaning of khadi one has to know why it has to be turned out by hand and not by power machinery. Why should innumerable hands be employed when a single person can manipulate an engine which can produce the same amount of cloth in far less time? If khadi has to be produced by hand, why not by the *takli* only? And if the *takli*, why not the bamboo *taklil* And if we could get the necessary work by suspending yarn by means of a stone, why even *taklil* Such questions are perfectly natural. To find proper answers to all such is a necessary part of khadi research."<sup>60</sup>

"We want to restrict our attention to only one of the seven lakhs of villages. We want the same independence for that village as we want for any other of the seven lakh villages and the world at large. So, our villages should at least become self-reliant as far as food and clothing are concerned.

"In such villages there cannot be any need for metal or any other imposed currency for mutual transactions. Our standard should be a rural product, which everyone can make, which can be stored and the price of which does not fluctuate daily. What can this be? It can neither be soap, nor oil, nor vegetables. Thus, after enumerating and eliminating all the things only yarn remains. Everyone can produce it. There is always a demand for it. It can be stored well. If we can introduce yarn currency in the villages, they will make great progress and become self-reliant very soon. This is not an attempt to enumerate all the advantages of yarn currency. I want to tell you only what it means and how it will function. . .

"In such a scheme every house can become a mint and can make as much money (yarn) as it wants."<sup>61</sup>

"My experience tells me that if khadi is to become universal, both in cities and in villages, it should be made available only in exchange of yarn . . .

"I hope that as days go by everyone will himself insist on buying khadi only in exchange of yarn. If this does not happen and if they give yarn grudgingly swaraj through non-violence is impossible. Surely some effort has to be made for swaraj. It cannot be had by mere begging. A certain kind of freedom can of course be obtained on the strength of the rifle, but it will not be real swaraj and I for one am not interested in it. . .

"What I am taking about relates to the crores of the starving people. If they are to live, and live well, the charkha will have to be central and spinning undertaken voluntarily also by those who do not need to spin. The weapons of non-violence must not be adopted by people because they have no other alternative. Therefore to my mind the rule of yarn for khadi which has been introduced has to exist and increase in its application."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> (Harijan, 1-3-1942; 75:353.)

<sup>61</sup> (Harijan Sevak, 3-5-1942; 76:42-43.)

<sup>62</sup> (Gram Udyog Patrika, Vol. I, pp. 352-354; 81:55-57.)

"It is my firm view that we should demand yarn for the khadi required by the Congress. It calls for tact and efficiency."<sup>63</sup>

"If we believe that swaraj hangs by the hand-spun thread, then it is clear that the value of yarn will be far greater than gold and silver currency. Constructive workers are not exempt from spinning. How can there be any such exemption from *yajnal* Spinning is the necessary *yajna* for everyone."<sup>64</sup>

". . . Just as gold and silver emerge as coins from a mint, so khadi alone should emerge from a yarn bank. Not until such time as this happens will the defects in hand-spun yam be removed and the quality of khadi improved beyond expectation. This work cannot be accomplished by compulsion. Khadi workers must be selfless, true and of a scientific mind for the easy, quick and voluntary achievement of this noble end.

"To achieve it is the real goal of the Charkha Sangh. It will not matter if, in working up to this end, all the sales bhandars have to be closed and khadi-wearers reduced to a handful. Even so there will be no shame attaching to the endeavour. On the other hand, if khadi is sold as a symbol of hypocrisy and untruth it will drag the names of both the Charkha Sangh and the Congress in the mud and khadi will no longer be able either to deliver swaraj or be the mainstay of the poor. Unbelievers will ask: 'Then why take so much trouble over khadi? Why not let it remain as one of the many occupations of village India, instead of being a fad of non-violence?' Those who are khadi-mad must learn the secret of the science of khadi and be prepared even to die for it and thereby prove that it is the true symbol of non-violent swaraj."<sup>65</sup>

"It is to be hoped that every khadi bhandar will become a model of service and thereby not only raise itself but also maintain the honour that khadi carries."<sup>66</sup>

### Khadi Vs Mill

"If therefore we merely use mill-made cloth, we simply deprive the poor of what they need, at least increase the price of mill-made cloth. The only way therefore to encourage swadeshi is to manufacture more cloth. Mills cannot grow like mushrooms. We must, therefore, fall back upon

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<sup>63</sup> (Letter written to Shrikrisnadas Jaju on 28-12-1945; 82:293.)

<sup>64</sup> (Harijan, 28-4-1946; 84:34.)

<sup>65</sup> (Harijan, 7-7-1946; 84:381-82.)

<sup>66</sup> (Harijan, 29-9-1946; 85:355.)

hand-woven and hand-spun yarn. Yarn has never perhaps been so dear as it is today and mills are making fabulous profits out of yarn. He, therefore, who hand-spins a yard of yarn, helps production and cheapens its price."<sup>67</sup>

"Letters are coming in from everywhere telling me that greedy persons have been selling foreign or mill-made cloth by passing it off as khadi and they also put up the price of such cloth. This does not surprise me. When the entire system of government is based on fraud, what else can we expect from people? Go where you will, to law-courts, shops or hospitals, even to legislatures everywhere you will see cheating. Non-co-operation is intended to save us from this. Our non-co-operation is directed not against individuals but against their misdeeds. There is, however, always the danger, in trying to save ourselves from one kind of sin, our being caught in another. And so long as we like to have cloths like that made in the mills and so long as our cloth is not woven before our eyes, so long the danger of being cheated will remain. The easiest safeguard against this is that every village should produce its own khadi and that people in the cities should buy only such khadi as does not look like mill-made cloth, and that too preferably stamped with a Congress mark. Even if all these precautions are taken, there is no guarantee that there would be no danger of fraud."<sup>68</sup>

"If thirty crores of people *will*, if the core members of the congress *will*, I am sure that we can boycott foreign cloth and manufacture enough for our wants during this month. Three conditions are necessary: we must discard all foreign cloth, do with the least possible cloth during the transition stage, and get all the khadi we need woven by the village weaver out of yarn spun by ourselves or our neighbours."<sup>69</sup>

"We try needlessly to encourage the use of mill cloth, and it is also a mistake to go running to buy it. Indian mill cloth will always be in demand. If, by our actions, we tempt the mill-owners the quality of cloth is bound to deteriorate and the traders in such cloth, who are concerned only with their profits, will be tempted to put up the prices. We cannot expect the dealers to conduct their business for the good of the country till the people themselves have that good at heart. Which is easier of the two, that I should put up with the discomfort of wearing khadi, - if discomfort it is and if its price is high, pay that price; or that the millowners should forgo their profits of crores of rupees? It is foolish to expect any big sacrifices from the millowners. They

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<sup>67</sup> (Young India, 28-4-1920; 17:353.)

<sup>68</sup> (Navajivan, 7-9-1921; 21:52.)

<sup>69</sup> (Young India, 6-10-1921; 21:254.)

will be the last, not the first to wake up, and we should conduct our struggle on that assumption. To blame them on this ground is to blame human nature. In their place we would certainly behave in much the same way. Those of us, therefore, who have accepted swadeshi as a religious duty should not use mill-made cloth...

"In short, khadi imported from Japan or produced in our mills is not khadi but something which merely looks like it, and we must keep away from it . . .

"Once foreign cloth has disappeared completely from their midst, the women will not take long to catch up. But even men have not ceased to care for outward show. They have not yet completely overcome their fondness for fine cloth. Dhotis, for example, they must always have mill-made, and the heaviness of khadi seems an inconvenience. How can we expect anything from women when men themselves have not completely turned away from such things? There are, thus, many obstacles in our path of swadeshi. When we have removed them all, we are sure to see the sun of swaraj rising on the horizon."<sup>70</sup>

"I personally see no necessity of selling silk to make khadi popular. One can, however, understand and condone the use of silk borders to beautify khadi. . .

"Khadi can and should have only one meaning, viz, hand- woven cloth made from hand-spun thread. Silk-thread, just fibre and wool woven in this manner may be called, if we like, silk, jute and woollen khadi, respectively. But it would be ridiculous for anyone dressed in khadi silk to claim that he was encouraging khadi."<sup>71</sup>

"Foreign cloth must be totally banished from the Indian market, if India is to become an economically free nation, if her peasantry is to be freed from chronic pauperism, if that peasantry is to find honourable employment during times of famine and such other visitations. Protection of her staple industry is her birthright. I would therefore protect the Indian mills against foreign competition even though for the time being it may result in mulcting the poor people. Such mulcting can take place only if the mill-owners be so unpatriotic as to raise prices owing to the monopoly they may secure. I have therefore no hesitation in advocating the repeal of cotton excise duties and imposition of a prohibitive import duty.

"Similarly and consistently I would protect hand-spun khaddar against the home mills. And I know that if only foreign competition is avoided khaddar will be protected without difficulty. Foreign cloth will be banished when public opinion becomes effectively powerful. The same power will insure the protection of khaddar against mills. But my strong belief is that khaddar will come to its own without any unseemly war with the mills. But, whilst khaddar has only a limited number of votaries, they, the votaries, must necessarily preach khaddar in preference to

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<sup>70</sup> (Navajivan, 6-10-1921; 21:254, 255, 256.)

<sup>71</sup> (Navajivan, 20-4-1924; 23:463.)

and to the exclusion of yarn and cloth manufactured even in our mills. To give the option is to kill khaddar."<sup>72</sup>

"I have purposely kept the precious samples in front of me in order to warn me of my duty not to be angry against the mill- owners in question in spite of their unpatriotic conduct. I know that they could have conducted their trade without entering into competition with khadi. They could at least have refrained from miscalling their coarse cloth 'khadi' when they well knew that 'khadi' was a word used to signify hand-spun cotton cloth. But two wrongs cannot make one right. My satyagrahi spirit tells me that I may not retaliate. I may not imitate their unpatriotic conduct. I know that, if lovers of khadi remain true to the faith, hand-spun khadi will thrive against all odds."<sup>73</sup>

"If to make khadi a practical proposition is interpreted to mean that it should compete with mill-made cloth, I think that is almost impossible. Dharma need never enter into such competition. Mill-owners may give away their cloth gratis just to kill khadi, but can we do the same with khadi? There certainly is competition in trade when commodities are offered, (virtually) for nothing. I am willing to listen to all criticism of the work there. And I am eager to remove all recognizable faults."<sup>74</sup>

"... I want the mill industry to prosper - only I do n t want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary if the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction. The millowners who support me understand my attitude and many want this movement to prosper, even if its prosperity should mean their loss.

"And you ask how those who produce mill cloth may wear anything else. Do you know that in Manchester the manufacturers do not wear their own products? You need not mind your inability to use cloth produced by your own mills. The good Duchess of Sutherland saw the miserable plight of the poor islanders of Hebrides and placed spinning-wheels and looms at their disposal. The citizens of Manchester, including millowners, do wear the handspun stuffs prepared by the Hebrides people, even at three times the cost of the mill stuff."<sup>75</sup>

"But even if the mills were to play the game, Congressmen will not need to use mill-cloth or to advertise it. The mills playing the game means their advertising and selling khadi, their assimilation of the khadi spirit, their recognition of the predominance of khadi over mill-cloth.

"It must be definitely realized that mills alone, even if they wished, cannot in our generation displace foreign cloth. Therefore there must be in the country an agency that would devote its attention, so far as boycott of foreign cloth is concerned, exclusively to khadi propaganda. That agency has been the Congress since 1920. Khadi production and khadi propaganda act at once as a check upon the greed of mills and also, strange as it may appear, as an indirect but very

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<sup>72</sup> (Young India, 28-8-1924; 25:43.)

<sup>73</sup> (Young India, 28-8-1924; 25:43-44.)

<sup>74</sup> (Letter to Kantilal Parekh from Sabarmati Ashram written on 11-6-1926; 30:565.)

<sup>75</sup> (Speech on Khadi in Amalner on 12-2-1927; 33:68-69.)

effective encouragement to mills in their struggle against foreign competition. Exclusive devotion to khadi on the part of Congressmen enables khadi to find a foothold and enables mills effectively to carry on their operations where the Congress has as yet no influence worth the name. Hence it is that the mills have never resented the khadi propaganda. On the contrary many of their agents have assured me that they have benefited by the khadi propaganda inasmuch as it has created an anti-foreign-cloth atmosphere enabling them to sell their comparatively coarser-count cloth. Stop exclusive khadi propaganda, play with mill-cloth and you kill khadi and in the long run you kill even mill-cloth, for it cannot by itself stand foreign competition. In a competition between indigenous and foreign mills the one disturbing factor of healthy mass sentiment will be wholly wanting, if there was no khadi spirit."<sup>76</sup>

". . . And I have repeatedly shown in these pages that there can be no comparison between khadi and mill-cloth even as there can be none between the home-made chapati, however costly it may be and troublesome to make, and cheap, easily prepared machine-made biscuit. Mill-cloth needs no protection or patronage from the public in the sense that khadi does. Indian mill-cloth gets preference as it ought to when khadi is unavailable at any cost, when machine-made cloth becomes a necessity and when the choice lies only between foreign cloth and swadeshi mill-cloth. Khadi it is clear must displace both. Khadi has no established market like mill-cloth. It has not even become as yet a bazaar article. Every yard of khadi bought means at least eighty-five per cent in the mouths of the starving and the poor ones of India. Every yard of mill-cloth bought means more than 75 per cent in the pockets of the capitalists and less than 25 per cent in the pockets of the labourers who are never helpless, who are well able to take care of themselves, and who never starve or need starve in the sense that the helpless millions starve for whose sake khadi has been conceived."<sup>77</sup>

"My conviction is that a time must come and that within a few months when the mills will have to make their choice and accept the terms that were offered to them last year. But it will wholly depend upon the determination of the people to boycott foreign cloth at any cost and replace it by genuine khadi. Khadi has no limits. For we have millions of human spindles and lakhs of human looms. The one thing needful is the will to do it."<sup>78</sup>

"I regard the question of competing with cloth made in textile mills - whether foreign or Indian - as a temporary and futile one. When farmers store their own cotton, carry on all the activities up to that of spinning in their own homes, they will certainly get their own khadi made by paying the proper wage to the weaver and not touch mill-made cloth. The economics of khadi is unique. It has a soul whereas the economics of textile mills is soulless. Hence the two differ in kind. Just as the waters of the ocean and those of the Ganges being qualitatively different cannot be compared to each other, similarly there can be no comparison between cloth produced in textile mills and hand-made cloth produced in villages."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> (Young India, 10-5-1928; 36:301.)

<sup>77</sup> (Young India, 4-10-1928; 37:330.)

<sup>78</sup> (Young India, 7-3-1929; 40:96-97.)

<sup>79</sup> (Navajivan, 1-9-1929; 41:346.)



". . . But the khadi propaganda has produced in the people a love for swadeshi on a scale unknown before, and it has resulted in preference being given by the poor villagers to indigenous mill-cloth over foreign cloth. But the reader may note what many mills have done to khadi. They have unscrupulously and unfairly resorted to the manufacture of coarse cloth, and have not felt ashamed even to label it khadi with the pictures of the charkha printed upon that spurious stuff."<sup>80</sup>

"If khadi is not constantly kept in view, the result will be that the price of cloth made in mills in India - not Indian mills - will keep increasing and the boycott will never become effective.

1. In this age, no amount of effort would make it possible for mills to make cloth sufficient to meet the country's needs.
2. The concern of mills generally is, and will be, profits.
3. The Government can, at any time, suppress the mills.
4. The present trend indicates that mills in this country are passing under foreign ownership and control.
5. As mills are dependent upon foreign machines and foreign techniques, they could, all of a sudden, be faced with a difficult situation.

While on the contrary:

1. If the sentiment for khadi becomes widespread in the country, we can produce today as much khadi as we require.
2. Khadi does not require as much capital as mills do.
3. It does not require as much technical skill.
4. It may be said that potentially there are thirty crores of labourers employed in the production of khadi.
5. All the implements required for the production of khadi are made in the country.
6. Khadi cannot be suppressed either by the Government or any other power.
7. Khadi can be produced in every home.
8. It is not necessary to make khadi at one place and send it to another. At present it does have to travel to some extent because the sentiment for khadi has not gained much ground."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> (Young India, 26-9-1929; 41:471.)

<sup>81</sup> (Navajivan, 6-4-1930; 43:195.)

"The Congress toleration of mills is based on the belief that the mills can serve a useful purpose during the transition stage. Immediate exclusion of foreign cloth becomes easier through the indigenous mills if they work in sympathy with the movement. It is easier for khaddar to deal and compete with the indigenous mills alone than to do so with them plus English, Japanese, Italian and other mills. The increase in the number of indigenous mills need not frighten khaddarites. The increase is no doubt proof that the economic influence of khaddar is not yet fully felt. When khaddar becomes universal, many mills may find their occupation gone. It is needless to speculate whether khaddar will obtain such a hold on the people. It will depend upon the faithfulness of the workers. There is no flaw in the reasoning applied to khaddar. It is merely a question of giving a true education to the millions of villagers, of changing national taste, of realizing the tremendous power of the wheel to banish pauperism from the land. It is no small thing to be able to show a way the adoption of which will be an insurance against starvation and its attendant results. . .

"As the author of the revival of khaddar I must confess that it never entered my head that I should wish for high prices of mill-manufactures for the protection of khaddar. It is one thing to seek protection against killing competition, wholly another to wish for higher prices of commodities produced by a few for many even for the protection of an analogous industry. Khaddar economics is wholly different from the ordinary. The latter takes no note of the human factor. The former wholly concerns itself with the human. The latter is frankly selfish, the former necessarily unselfish. Competition and therefore prices are eliminated from the conception of khaddar."<sup>82</sup>

"My faith in khadi is, if possible, stronger than ever from the moral, economic and national (in its widest sense) standpoint; there is no comparison between khadi and mill-cloth, even indigenous. Exploitation of the poor through mill-cloth or mill- yarn is an impossibility in the case of khadi. Exploitation of the poor through mill-cloth and mill-yarn is inevitable in some shape or form, be it ever so mild. The use of genuine khadi constitutes some (be it ever so small) automatic return to the poor for their continuous exploitation by the comparatively rich and can in the aggregate become a mighty return, though never adequate, to the masses living in the villages. . .

"Khadi represents human values; mill-cloth represents mere metallic value."<sup>83</sup>

". . . khadi can give employment to crores whereas silk hardly to more than a few thousand. Khadi is a necessity for both the poor and the rich. Silk is a necessity for none but a few who, in order to nourish a religious sentiment, insist on silk garments on certain occasions. Hence when it is a question of choice between silk and khadi, naturally those who have the welfare of starving millions at heart will always choose khadi. . .

". . . let it be remembered that if cotton khadi lives but silk dies, the hands left idle due to the death of silk can easily take up cotton spinning and weaving, but if silk displaces cotton, it cannot employ the crores that will be without occupation or chance of it due to the death of

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<sup>82</sup> (Young India, 16-7-1931; 47:143-44.)

<sup>83</sup> (Harijan, 9-2-1934; 57:133-34.)

cotton khadi. It seems to me, therefore, to be the obvious duty of all lovers of *Daridranarayana* to prefer cotton khadi always when the question of making a choice confronts them. It will be economical in the long run to pay for the present dearer prices for fine cotton khadi than for the corresponding fine silk wear."<sup>84</sup>

"There is no doubt that khadi cannot compete with mill- cloth, it was never meant to. If the people will not understand or appreciate the law governing khadi, it will never be universal. It must then remain the fad of monied people and cranks. And if it is to be merely that, the labours of a huge organization like the A.I.S.A. must mean a waste of effort, if not something much worse. . .

"At present we are labouring under a heavy handicap. Cotton production has been centralized for the sake of Lancashire and, if you will, for the sake of Indian mills. Prices of cotton are determined by the prices in foreign land. When the production of cotton is distributed in accordance with the demands of khadi economics, cotton prices would not fluctuate and, in any case, will be, in effect, lower than today. When the people, either through State protection or through voluntary effort, have cultivated the habit of using only khadi, they will never think of it in terms of money, even as millions of vegetarians do not compare the prices of flesh foods with those of non-flesh foods. They will starve rather than take flesh foods even though they may be offered free."<sup>85</sup>

"Uncertified khadi means deprivation of the spinner's rightful wage and general injury to khadi work. That khadi and [those] articles made of khadi are certified which are sold by dealers certified by the All-India Spinners' Association."<sup>86</sup>

"You ask about woollens and silks. Who wears them? Can the poor do so? Why should we take all the trouble for a few rich people? These things cannot become universal. We may certainly keep stocks of woollens and silks in khadi bhandars as we keep other things there but we must understand that that is no part of our work."<sup>87</sup>

"Uncertified khadi dealers are a powerful menace to khadi whether from the standpoint of the poor man or of non-violence. For the dealer knows only his own pocket and nothing else matters to him. Of course, he goes to the weaver and the spinner and makes all kinds of promises, not knowing that if he killed the A.I.S.A. he would kill himself."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> (Harijan; 7-11-1936; 64:8-9.)

<sup>85</sup> (Harijan, 10-12-1938; 68:173-74.)

<sup>86</sup> (In a statement to the Press in Seagaon on 25-1-1940; 71:140.)

<sup>87</sup> (Discussion with the Charkha Sangh Workers on 27/28-11- 1945; 82:123.)

<sup>88</sup> (Harijan, 12-5-1946; 84:94.)

## Message of Khadi

To Harijans<sup>89</sup>

"I have given up all those things which were only a means for securing swaraj. You must, however, pursue that which helps the attainment of self-purification - khadi, the abolition of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity. Practise these as your ordinary dharma regardless of whether swaraj is secured or not, otherwise we shall surely perish. Hinduism will be destroyed if untouchability is not ended and, without khadi, there will be such starvation in the country that our flesh will be eaten up by crows and dogs, leaving only bones behind."

"Universalization of spinning means the automatic solution of many other questions. Take the untouchability problem. It is impossible to universalize the wheel without tackling untouchability. Do you know that the untouchables would have nothing to do with khadi if we had not made them our own? They would say, "What shall we do with khadi when we are treated as untouchables?" And unless they co-operate, you cannot achieve the full khadi programme. And so also for the Hindu-Muslim question. The two things hang together. You can thus see that spinning alone does lead to swaraj. . ."90

"Very few people have any notion of what khadi means to Harijans. Simple weaving is almost an exclusive speciality of Harijans, and even though mill spinning and weaving have deprived many Harijans of a source of livelihood, thousands of them are still dependent upon weaving. But a friend argues: 'What is the use of keeping alive a perishing industry? Why not give them instead an industry that may be growing? Surely, you do not intend to confine them to worn-out occupations even when you are devising all manner of means for their uplift otherwise'. Indeed, I have no desire to confine Harijans, or for that matter, anybody, to spinning and weaving or to any one occupation, if they can be more profitably employed in any other; only I do not take the gloomy view of hand-spinning and weaving which the objector takes. I personally believe that hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving have a brilliant future, at least in India. If the millions are to live with any degree of comfort, the mills must seek main custom outside India."<sup>91</sup>

"What can a swadeshi exhibition do for Harijans, you may ask. I think khadi has got a great deal to do with it, because the introduction of hand-spinning and hand-weaving of cloth, you will be

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<sup>89</sup> (Speech at Bardoli, 17-1-1925; 26:9.)

<sup>90</sup> (Speech at khadi workers' meeting at Taltola on 9-5-1925; 27:67-68.)

<sup>91</sup> (Harijan, 27-10-1933; 56:146-47.)

surprised to know, has brought a ray of comfort and light into the dark homes of thousands and thousands of Harijans. I had the good fortune to go to many Harijan homes even during this brief tour and discovered the potency of khadi for Harijans. You will also be surprised to know that there are many things - I hope those things are exhibited here - at which Harijans have worked for the most part, if not entirely."<sup>92</sup>

"I also heard a rumour that I have changed my opinion about the absolute necessity of khadi. I can give my assurance that my opinion has not undergone any changes whatsoever. On the contrary, the opinion that I expressed in the year 1919 has become strengthened by experience. And I am convinced that khadi is the only solution for the deep and deepening distress of the untouchables. Khadi is cheap at any price, for every pie that you spend in buying khadi goes directly into the pocket of the poor people. But I must not tire you with the arguments that I have advanced so often from the various platforms. I am only hoping that in this great movement of self-purification we shall not only get rid of untouchability but many other impurities from which our society is suffering. And I hope that those Harijans who are present at this meeting will fully bear in mind that they have also to contribute their share in this movement."<sup>93</sup>

"Those who, apart from the whole programme of anti-untouchability, are interested in the economic betterment of Harijans should know that khadi gives employment to thousands of Harijan men, women and children who otherwise had no employment. It entirely supports some families and supplements the slender resources of many more and keeps the wolf from the door. Its capacity to be the only universal source of employment to the starving millions is not now seriously questioned. It is this poor man's stay which is being undermined by unscrupulous methods. I learnt in Madura that some dealers in cloth were palming off khadi cloth woven from mill-spun yarn as hand-spun and hand-woven. I was shown specimens which were exact copies of special khadi varieties. Lovers of khadi and Harijan servants who believe in the potency of khadi to serve Harijans are requested not to buy khadi which does not bear the hallmark of the All-India Spinners' Association."<sup>94</sup>

## To Muslims

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<sup>92</sup> (Speech at All-India Swadeshi Exhibition, Madras, 20-12-1933; 56:359.)

<sup>93</sup> (Speech at public meeting, Tirupur, 6-2-1934; 57:123.)

<sup>94</sup> (Harijan, 9-2-1934; 57:133.)

"Spinning is such an activity that both Hindus and Muslims can take equal part in it. In respect of some crafts, Muslims lead the world and weaving is one of them. The Dacca muslin used to be woven by Muslims alone. That is exactly why the weavers bore the sweet and dignified."<sup>95</sup>

"I have not known many Muslim organizations devoted specially to khadi work. Nor are many Muslims found to take 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. Let me hope this committee will change this state of things. I hope, too, that the members are all spinners and khadi weavers."<sup>96</sup>

"You can win swaraj only with non-violence and never with violence. If you are convinced of that, you will not take time to be convinced that by spinning alone can you win swaraj. For, non-violence in action can be achieved by nothing but a successful working out of a peaceful programme of the universalization of the spinning-wheel. How will you solve the Hindu-Muslim question but by getting the Hindu to work in the cause of khadi for the Mussalm'an, and *vice versa*? And in order that you get the Mussalman and the Hindu and the untouchable to work together, you have to plod away in faith and confidence in yourselves."<sup>97</sup>

"Maulana Shaukat Ali has asked me to say everywhere, where I meet Mussalmans, that he had joined the Spinners' Association. He has got unlimited faith in the charkha because he knows that, so long as both the Hindus and Mussalmans are not wholly clad in khaddar, India cannot be free. . .

. . Only they can be 'A' Class members of the A.I.S.A. who contribute to it one thousand yards of self-spun yarn per month - in all, twelve thousand yards in the year - and are habitual wearers of khadi. The Maulana hopes that he will be able to bring around three thousand members from among the Mussalmans before the year closes. It has been complained that, whereas there are many Hindus in the khadi service, there are but few Mussalmans. Therefore, the Maulana wants me to declare this also that all such Mussalmans whose hearts are pure and who are industrious had got their place in it. But they who want to come into it must obey its laws. Hindus,

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<sup>95</sup> (Navajivan, 27-7-1924; 24:450.)

<sup>96</sup> (Young India, 31-7-1924; 24:480.)

<sup>97</sup> (Speech at Khadi Workers' Meeting at Taltola on 9-5-1925; (27:68.)

Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis, Jews and all have their place in this A.I.S.A., if they believe in khadi."<sup>98</sup>

"Wherever I have gone I have asked managers of khaddar organizations whether they have Mussalman workers with them and they have invariably complained of the difficulty of getting Mussalman workers for khaddar. Khadi Pratishtan has some but they belong to the humbler walks of life. The Abhay Ashram has one or two. I cannot multiply these instances. The thing is that khadi service has not yet become a popular service. There is not much money to be had for service. In the figures I analysed some time ago the highest pay given was Rs. 150/- per month. That was paid to a very able organizer. The best khaddar workers are all volunteers everywhere. The terms of service must necessarily be stiff. You cannot have whole-time khaddar workers who do not themselves spin or habitually wear khaddar. I would love to have many Mussalmans of the right stamp offering their services. Let them all apply to the Maulana Saheb. He has undertaken to examine every case personally and make his recommendation to the Council. But I give due warning to all concerned whether Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis or Jews, that they must not blame the Council if the khaddar service becomes a Hindu preserve for want of efforts, ability or love for khaddar on the part of the others."<sup>99</sup>

### To Women

"I only pray for their goodwill. I need much help from them. I get some, but it is still too little. When Hindu and Muslim sisters have adopted the spinning-wheel and come to look upon khadi as their adornment, I shall feel that I have got all I wanted. I shall then certainly please my correspondent by wearing a dhoti and a long shirt with a collar, for I believe that, when the women have fallen in love with khadi, swaraj will have been won. Meanwhile the correspondent should be kind to me and to those like me who wear a loin-cloth and, even if he regards the loin-cloth as indecent, should look upon people who wear it as his brethren, overlooking their indecency."<sup>100</sup>

"Were our mothers mad that they used to spin? Now when I ask you to spin, I must appear mad to you. But it is not Gandhi who is mad; it is yourself who are so. You do not have any compassion for the poor. Even so you try to convince yourself that India has become prosperous

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<sup>98</sup> (Speech at public Meeting, Bhagalpur, on 1-10-1925; 28:276.)

<sup>99</sup> (Young India, 8-10-1925; 28:308-9.)

<sup>100</sup> (Navajivan, 27-7-1924; 24:458.)

and sing of that prosperity. If you want to enter public life, render public service, then spin on the charkha, wear khadi."<sup>101</sup>

"I know hundreds of husbands who have been delighted to find their wives in khadi clothes. Their household expenditure has been reduced and their love for their khadi-clad wives have grown . . .

"I appeal to the sisters who think like her to take boldly to khadi and realize that beauty does not consist in dress but in purity of character, and clothes are not meant for adornment but for protecting the body from heat and cold."<sup>102</sup>

"I assure you that in the days of Rama and Sita there was nothing but khaddar, hand-spun and hand-woven. When Sita traversed the length and breadth of India she was not dressed, as you are, in foreign cloth. For sita what cloth her country produced was quite enough for her decoration. It was reserved for the modern women of India to tell me that khaddar is too coarse for them. But do you know that by your ceasing to wear khaddar millions of our sisters and brothers have been reduced to poverty? It is all very well for you who are fairly well-to-do, to attend functions and to go about in saris of 18 cubits. But remember that your sisters in the villages of India have not only no saris such as you have, but have not even enough food to eat. And I am telling God's truth when I say that I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of women in India who have no clothes to wear but rags.

"I, therefore, ask you for the sake of those sisters, for the sake of your religion, and for the sake of God, to throw away all the foreign cloth that you are using and to wear such khaddar saris as you can procure . . .

"I ask you once more to restore the spinning-wheel to its proper place. Your presence here pleases me. But it will soon become painful and intolerable for me to attend such meetings if sisters continue to besiege these meetings dressed in foreign cloth. I have no desire to hear my own voice, and if I still continue to address meetings, it is because I have still a hope lingering in my breast that some words of mine will penetrate the minds of those that I address. May my words uttered this afternoon produce such an effect upon your mind."<sup>103</sup>

"A woman is adorable, not for the jewellery she wears, but for the purity of her heart. I therefore urge you, if you believe that khadi will solve all the distress of India, to a certain extent, to part with the money that you have brought and your jewellery also, if you can give it to the cause. If you will go a step further, I would ask you also to spare some time to turn the spinning- wheel. It is a fine occupation for women in their leisure hours and it would be much better for you to pass

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<sup>101</sup> (Speech at women's conference, Sojitra on 16-1-1925; 26:2-3.)

<sup>102</sup> (Navajivan, 22-2-1925; 26:185-86.)

<sup>103</sup> (Speech at women's meeting in Madras on 22-3-1925; 26:368.)



your time in this useful occupation than idle talk. Now, you will give what you can to the volunteers who will go in your midst."<sup>104</sup>

"What I ask you all is to consider your own dharma and henceforth make a sacred resolve that for the sake of these poor sisters you will wear nothing but khadi. But then khadi needs something more than merely wearing cloth spun and woven by the sacred hands of these villagers. If you will, through this khadi, think of these poor sisters with a true heart, then khadi will be a symbol not only of your outward change but the whole heart will be changed. If you do that you will again revive the age of Sati and Sita. And that is what I am incessantly praying God to make you like. But even God cannot make us what we should be, against our own wills. God only helps those who are willing to help themselves. . . "<sup>105</sup>

"Immediately the spinning-wheel is reinstated in all its glory and with all its implications in the millions of cottages of India, woman recognizes her definite power and her place in India's regeneration. For she is then able to say to men, 'you depend for your food and your clothes as much upon us as on yourselves.' 'We', she may say, 'clean and cook your food, we spin the yarn from which khadi is prepared.' Then she is clothed with dignity which is hers by birthright and of which we, men and traitors of our womanhood, have deprived her. For in our stupidity and in our ignorance we removed from each cottage spinning-wheels and became infatuated with the foreign fineries. . .

"... I have come to you to wake you up to a sense of duty by the starving millions on whom and on whose labour you and I are living. Even your money, your jewellery, your rings and your necklaces can be of no earthly use to me unless both men and women will wear khadi and nothing but that. This collecting of purses for the spinning-wheel is only a brief and intermediate interval. When every man and woman in India naturally takes to khadi as they all take to the grains that are grown on India's plains there will be as little use for these collections as there is for collection in order to carry on propaganda for cultivating rice and wheat in India."<sup>106</sup>

". . . And if I could but induce you to understand the tremendous importance that khadi has to millions of starving people living in 7,00,000 villages in the whole of India, you will understand that enthusiasm and effort are not only necessary but indispensable. Remember the fact that it is calculated to serve not the city-dwellers but millions of starving people living in the villages."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> (Speech at women's meeting in Trichinopoly on 20-9-1927; 35:11.)

<sup>105</sup> (Speech at women's meeting at Karaikudi on 24-9-1927; (35:27.)

<sup>106</sup> (Speech at public meeting, Pagneri on 27-9-1927; 35:44-45.)

<sup>107</sup> (Speech at Ernakulam on 13-10-1927; 35:128.)

"Only those women who have drunkards as their husbands know what havoc the drink devil works in homes that once were orderly and peace-giving. Millions of women in our hamlets know what unemployment means. Today the Charkha Sangh covers over one hundred thousand women against less than 10,000 men.

"Let the women of India take up these two activities, specialize in them; they would contribute more than man to national freedom. They would have an access of power and self-confidence to which they have hitherto been strangers.

". . . They will find when they study the subject of foreign-cloth boycott that it is impossible save through khadi. Mill-owners will themselves admit that mills cannot manufacture in the near future enough cloth for Indian requirements. Given a proper atmosphere, khadi can be manufactured in our villages, in our countless homes. Let it be the privilege of the women of India to produce this atmosphere by devoting every available minute to the spinning of yarn.

". . . If the women of India will listen and respond to my appeal, they must act quickly."<sup>108</sup>

". . . Men may well spin, but for generations the profession

of spinning has been practised by women and men's hands do not possess the same skill in this that women's do. Women alone can bring about this solidarity among their own sex. I would, therefore, advise women to make this their special field of work.

". . . Therefore, all those sisters who have faith in the spinning-wheel and the *takli* and who wish to devote themselves to saving sixty crores of rupees every year, should take up this work of boycott and the task of propagating spinning."<sup>109</sup>

## To Students

"We have lived through that golden age when, in this land, there were not these semi-starved millions as they are today. The creed of the spinning-wheel is that there should be a bond established between yourselves and the villagers; that is the meaning of village reconstruction - that is your another question. And the village reconstruction must dance round your charkha as the centre. You may not go to the villages, unless you take a little bit of bread to the semi-starved villagers. They will starve. During six months, if Sir P. G. Ray is to be depended upon, for six solid months cultivators of India, i.e., eighty per cent of the population of India - have no work. They are idle. Do you suppose that the peasantry of any part of the world can possibly enjoy four months' holiday and make both ends meet. Not even a millionaire in this age will be able to enjoy four months' holiday. They soon find there is a deficit to meet or there is some hopeless mismanagement of their estate. If you want to take a little bit of life into these little cottages of

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<sup>108</sup> (Young India, 10-4-1930; 43:220-21.)

<sup>109</sup> (Navajivan, 13-4-1930; 43:249.)

India, you will only do so by the revolution of the charkha and, therefore, I say, whoever draws one yard of yarn per day, has added to the wealth of India. . .

"You ask me a question about mill-cloth, *versus* foreign cloth. You have not studied the recent economics. I place mill-cloth and foreign cloth in the same category. I will not have you wear mill-cloth that comes from Ahmedabad, Bombay or even Banga Lakshmi. That is meant for those who do not think of India, who do not think of her future. Therefore, for you the real economics is to wear khaddar. When you wear khaddar, you are supporting the labour of a poor weaver. If you are to wear khaddar, you will be supporting many widows, you will be supporting many of your cultivators who may spin during their idle hours. You will be supporting many weavers who are not getting today sufficient for their labour. Study any history - economic history - and it will tell you that the majority of weavers have died out. . .

"... I tell you, the real economics for you are that you should wear khaddar. You should spin and spin. Spin in order to make khaddar cheap. That is discipline for you. It will enable you to create your purity. Sit at the spinning-wheel calmly for half an hour and watch the transformation of your heart. I can quote to you instances of many men and women, of brilliant administrators, one of whom was a member in the Bombay Executive Council. He is as old as I am. He learnt spinning only a few months ago. He said: 'After I began spinning at the wheel, I have somewhat got rid of my insomnia. I returned from office tired, sometimes at mid-night and, then, I was dozing, thinking of many problems which I did not want to think of. Now I sit at the spinning wheel and spin away. Immediately comes the all- refreshing sleep - the sleep of innocence.' Find out for yourselves what it can do. Find out what it cannot do."<sup>110</sup>

"I do not mean to suggest that one should give up one's studies and devote oneself immediately to khadi work. I suggest that a student who has courage, strength and faith should take a vow from today onwards that he will become a khadi worker when he has finished his studies. If he makes this resolve one can consider that his service in the cause of khadi has already begun, because he will then choose whatever he decides to learn with the object of acquiring the necessary capacity for this particular type of work."<sup>111</sup>

"Now, consider for yourselves what you owe to these men who pay for your education. I suggest then that you should render ceaseless service to these starving millions and that you should not be satisfied till this gnawing poverty is banished from our land. And, I have told you that khaddar is the easiest and the only way. I ask you not to allow your minds to be befogged by all

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<sup>110</sup> (Speech at Krishnath College, Behrampur on 6-8-1925; 28:42-44.)

<sup>111</sup> (Navajivan, 3-7-1927; 34:98.)

kinds of specious reasoning that will be advanced against the spinning- wheel and against khadi in these days of rush for machinery."<sup>112</sup>

"All over India, it has been my good fortune to enjoy the confidence and friendship of the student world. But I mention my pleasure over this address, because it contains a promise about khadi. The students have made a solemn promise in their address, henceforth to use nothing but khadi. Let me remind the students of the sacredness of promises. It is the custom very often in our country as also elsewhere especially for enthusiastic students to make all sorts of promises. This habit of making promises is really a vicious habit unless it is accompanied by a firm determination to fulfil them at any cost. If my recollections serve me right, it was from a teacher in Calicut that I received a pathetic letter asking me to speak to the student world, and put an emphasis on some of their failings. Day after day, it is being realized by educationists all the world over that mere literary education, unless it is built upon a solid foundation of character, is not only of no avail but is a mischievous accomplishment, and the beginning of character-building is surely made by complete adherence to truth."<sup>113</sup>

"I can say with certainty, if you wish to bring glory to this effort, take up some constructive work. By doing so, you will set an example to other students. Khadi is the first thing I shall talk about. You can render much service by wearing and selling it. Until settlement is reached, you can carry on that work and collect foreign cloth from house to house. And if you wish to go a step further, bring it here and make a bonfire of it. The burning of foreign cloth will bring much credit to you. You will see an article about the ruin that we bring upon India by using foreign cloth. There must be at least some of it left with you. When you take up this work, the Government will also be convinced that students have now begun to work.

"Among Tolstoy's stories, there is one in which Satan climbs on the top of a house to give a speech and, falling down, becomes unconscious. When he collapses, people say he has toppled down.

"Even if you tumble down people will say that you have achieved something. The nation will certainly admit that these students have at any rate done something. You can take a vow to clean up the streets of Ahmedabad or do prohibition work. You can undertake many such tasks."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> (Speech to students, Madras on 3-9-1927; 34:444.)

<sup>113</sup> (Addressing a public meeting in Calicut on 25-10-1927; 35:185.)

<sup>114</sup> (Speech to Gujarat College students in Ahmedabad on 30-1-1929; 38:414.)

". . . If you will express the requisite purity of character in action, you cannot do it better than through the spinning-wheel. Of all the myriads of names of God *Daridranarayana* is the most sacred inasmuch as it represents the untold millions of poor people as distinguished from the few rich people. The easiest and the best way of identifying yourselves somewhat with these starving millions is to spread the message of the spinning-wheel in the three-fold manner suggested by me. You can spread it by becoming expert spinners, by wearing khadi, and by pecuniary contributions. Remember that millions will never have access to the facilities that Malaviyaji has provided for you. What return will you make to these your brothers and sisters? . . .

". . . You need clothes. If you wear khadi worth one rupee, 13 annas will be paid out of that to the poor people. But if you were to buy foreign cloth that money would go out of the country. The poverty witnessed in this country is not to be found elsewhere in the world, and if you wish to remove it, you should wear khadi.

"I am aware that amongst those who wear khadi many men may be hypocrites, impostors, frauds and scoundrels. But those are common faults. Even those who do not wear khadi can have them. Even those who do not use khadi can be impostors or scoundrels. So, if such a man is an impostor or a fraud at least one good thing about him would be that he does wear khadi. I came across a prostitute who wears khadi. She said to me: 'Pray to God so that fallen women like me are absolved of our sins.' "<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> (Speech at Hindu University, Benaras on 25-9-1929, 41: 462-463.)