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Original Research Article

Borrowed Authority: Gandhi, the Indore Process, and the Politics of Knowledge Swaraj

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Abstract: This essay reframes Mahatma Gandhi's engagement with science as a problem of epistemic brokerage rather than philosophical conviction. On 17 August 1935, Gandhi devoted his weekly column in Harijan to reproducing, in his own words, "practically...the whole" of an instructional leaflet issued by the Institute of Plant Industry, Indore, describing a composting technique that its director, the British agronomist Albert Howard, had codified from the observed practice of Indian cultivators and published, with the Indian chemist Y. D. Wad, as The Waste Products of Agriculture (1931). Gandhi's act of reprinting, addressed explicitly to "Harijans and village workers who handle cattle-dung and night-soil," is read here as a documentable instance of knowledge circulation: peasant agricultural knowledge, systematised and partially re-credited by a colonial scientific institution, re-enters anti-colonial political discourse carrying the authority of that institution rather than of its original practitioners. A second, briefer case, the All-India Spinners' Association's crowdsourced design competitions for an improved charkha (1920, 1929), shows a structurally similar pattern of brokered validation in a different technical register. Drawing on the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi alongside Howard's own publications and recent secondary scholarship, the essay returns finally to the existing "Knowledge Swaraj" framework associated with the 2011 manifesto of that name to argue that Gandhi's practice of validating indigenous knowledge depended on, rather than transcended, colonial structures of scientific credit, a tension this literature's aspirational use of the term has not fully reckoned with.

Keywords: Gandhi, Albert Howard, Indore Process, Y. D. Wad, knowledge circulation, epistemic brokerage, colonial science, charkha, Knowledge Swaraj.

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi has been read, almost without exception, as a thinker who held views about science: for it, against it, ambivalent toward it, or offering an ethically reconstructed alternative to it. This essay asks a different kind of question. Rather than treating Gandhi as a philosopher whose statements about science can be assembled into a coherent doctrine, it treats him as a historical actor occupying a specific, traceable position in a network through which agricultural knowledge moved: from the unrecorded practice of Indian cultivators, through the codifying apparatus of a colonial research institute, and back into the explicitly anti-colonial discourse of village reconstruction. The vehicle for this argument is a single, dateable act: Gandhi's decision, on 17 August 1935, to reproduce almost the entirety of a technical leaflet on composting issued by the Institute of Plant Industry at Indore, under the directorship of the British agronomist Albert Howard.

The historiography of Gandhi's relationship to science has approached the question almost entirely from the side of doctrine and reception. Aldous Huxley's characterisation of Gandhi and the Khadi movement as anti-science, and the related distancing of Jawaharlal Nehru from Gandhi on this question, set much of the terms of the early debate (Visvanathan S, 1985; Singh B, 1988). Meghnad Saha's open contempt for the charkha, the loin-cloth and the bullock cart, and his comparison of Gandhi's economic thought to the Russian scientific community's dismissal of Tolstoy, were similarly influential in excluding Gandhi from mainstream Indian science-policy discourse (Visvanathan S, 1985; Narayan S, 1960). The sociologist Nirmal Kumar Bose, and Amrit Srinivasan's reading of Bose's fieldwork, likewise positioned Gandhi as a religious and political rather than scientific figure (Srinivasan A, 1993). Against this current, A. K. Biswas argued that Gandhi, unlike Vivekananda, neglected the material foundations of Indian civilisation even though the Khadi movement was itself deeply materially embedded (Biswas AK, 2000),

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while M. Mclure questioned whether satyagraha could be called scientific by conventional criteria at all (Mclure M, 1997). A second strand of scholarship has read Gandhi's relationship to science more sympathetically, though still largely at the level of stated principle. J. P. S. Uberoi credited Gandhi with a distinctive theory of the scientific experiment premised on the equality of humanity and nature (Uberoi JPS, 1982); Ashis Nandy argued that Gandhi's objection was never to technology as such but to the hierarchy between those who control it and those who do not (Nandy A, 1987); K. G. Pillai read Gandhi's technological vision as an early and coherent theory of small-scale, decentralised, sustainable development (Pillai KG, 1988); and Bhikhu Parekh observed that Gandhi's use of the language of experiment and research had still not received the sustained attention it deserved (Parekh BC, 1989). Sudheendra Sahasrabuddhe located Gandhis critique of modern science within his broader critique of Western civilisation (Sahasrabuddhe S, 1997), while Shiv Visvanathan, in a more constructive vein, described Gandhi as one of the most innovative scientific minds of the Swadeshi era, whose reconfigured science would have replaced the laboratory with the ashram (Visvanathan S, 1997). Anjali Roy examined Gandhi's technological vision against Nehru's developmentalism (Roy A, 2008), and Anup Sam Ninan traced how Gandhi integrated technological and sustainability thinking into a wider programme of rural self-sufficiency (Ninan AS, 2009). Subhasis Sahoo has most recently proposed that Gandhian Science be understood through four irreducible commitments: its refusal of the expert-layperson dichotomy, its anti-positivist method of data collection, its grounding of anti-vivisection in indigenous medical reasoning, and its insistence that scientific work answer to social value rather than to fact alone (Sahoo S, 2022).

This entire debate, whatever its internal disagreements, has been conducted at the level of doctrine, that is, what Gandhi believed about science across his career. It has not, so far as the present work has been able to establish, been conducted at the level of a specific, named scientific institution, a specific codified technique, and a specific dated act of republication. Tellingly, even the most widely used current reference work on Gandhi treats the one connection most relevant to this essay, his endorsement of Albert Howard's organic-agriculture research, in a single sentence, embedded in a chapter on Gandhi's later influence on Western environmentalism rather than examined as a case in its own right; the same chapter notes, citing Ramachandra Guha, that Gandhi's writings contain little sustained programme on human relations with nature at all (Hardiman D, 2011; Guha R, 1998). A separate and more recent body of work has approached the term this essay's title borrows, Knowledge Swaraj, as a policy and civil-society project rather than a historical description. The 2011 manifesto associated with the Knowledge in Civil Society collective, substantially shaped by C. Shambu Prasad, and Prasad's subsequent work with Mathieu Quet on Indian science-and-society movements, treat Knowledge Swaraj as an aspiration: plural, justice-oriented science answerable to civil society rather than to expert or state authority alone (KICS, 2011; Prasad CS, 2001; Prasad CS *et al.,*2022). This essay does not dispute that aspiration. It asks what a single historical instance of Gandhi practising something resembling knowledge validation actually looked like, and argues that the answer complicates the manifesto's normative use of the term more than it confirms it.

A third and distinct body of scholarship has examined Albert Howard himself as a figure in the history of colonial and imperial science: Gregory Barton has traced Howard's "Law of Return" and its afterlife in the British and American organic-farming movements (Barton GA, 2011), and Tad Brown's recent study of "humus gnosis" examines the funding disputes and intellectual-property contests that shaped Howard's career and his rivalry with the agricultural chemists of Rothamsted (Brown T, 2025). Both studies are, properly, about Howard. Neither centres Gandhi's reception of Howard's work, or asks what it meant, politically and epistemically, for an anti-colonial leader to cite a knighted colonial agronomist as evidence that village India already possessed scientific knowledge. It is this gap that the present essay occupies. It draws on the relevant volumes of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi to reconstruct, in close textual detail, a single circulation of agricultural knowledge: from the unrecorded practice of Indian cultivators, through Howard's Indian collaborator Y. D. Wad, to Howard himself, and finally into Gandhi's own village-reconstruction writing. A second, briefer case, the All-India Spinners' Association's charkha design competitions of 1920 and 1929, is then read alongside the first to show a structurally similar pattern of brokered, externally adjudicated validation operating in a different technical register. The essay concludes by returning to the Knowledge Swaraj framework with which this introduction began, in order to ask what this case suggests about the limits, as well as the possibilities, of Gandhi's anti-colonial epistemic politics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on archival and published primary sources read in conjunction with the secondary historiography on Gandhi and on Albert Howard. The primary corpus comprises: (i) the relevant volumes of The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG), specifically Volume XVII (February-June 1920), Volume XLI (June-October 1929) and Volume LXI (April 25-September 30, 1935), consulted in the Government of India Publications Division edition; (ii) the original issue of Harijan for 17 August 1935 (pp. 213-215), in which the Institute of Plant Industry's leaflet on compost manure was printed, consulted in digitised facsimile; (iii) Howard and Wad's The Waste Products

of Agriculture: Their Utilisation as Humus (1931) and Howard's An Agricultural Testament (1940); and (iv) Louise Howard's biographical account, Sir Albert Howard in India (1953). Secondary literature on the historiography of Gandhi and science, and on Albert Howard's place in the history of colonial and organic-farming science, was consulted to situate the argument and to establish the extent to which the specific case examined here has, or has not, already been addressed in the existing scholarship.

The method is close textual reading applied to a single, dateable act of knowledge transmission, rather than a survey of Gandhi's statements on science across his career. Three analytical steps were followed. First, the CWMG entries relevant to the Indore Institute of Plant Industry and to the All-India Spinners' Association's charkha competitions were located and read in their immediate textual context, including the editorial footnotes supplied by the CWMG editors, which themselves proved analytically significant (see Results and Discussion). Second, the credit structure embedded in each text, that is, which names are present, which are reduced to citation, and which are absent altogether, was reconstructed and compared across the agricultural and the mechanical case. Third, this reconstructed structure was set against the existing historiography on Gandhi's epistemic politics and the existing historiography on Howard, in order to establish what each currently does and does not account for.

The Indore Institute: Howard, Wad and the Cultivators

Albert Howard arrived in India in 1905 as Imperial Economic Botanist, initially stationed at the Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa, Bihar, before his appointment in 1924 as Director of the Institute of Plant Industry at Indore and Agricultural Adviser to the states of Central India and Rajputana (Howard LE, 1953). Howard's own later writing, and the biographical account given by his second wife and collaborator Louise Howard, describe a reversal of the expected colonial pedagogy: Howard had been sent to improve the agricultural methods of Indian cultivators, and concluded instead, after comparing yields, animal health and pest resistance on traditionally farmed land against his own experimental plots, that the cultivators already possessed knowledge his own training had not given him (Howard LE, 1953; Howard A, 1940). What Howard and his collaborators systematised at Indore, under the name that would make him internationally known, the Indore Process, was therefore not, on his own account, an invention. It was a codification: the conversion of unrecorded, geographically dispersed cultivator practice into a replicable, published and patentable technique.

That codification was published in 1931 as The Waste Products of Agriculture: Their Utilisation as Humus, with Howard's name listed first and that of the Institute's chemist, Y. D. Wad, second (Howard A *et al.,*1931). Wad's institutional role, as the chemist responsible for much of the laboratory analysis underlying the published method, is documented in the book itself, but the technique's subsequent international circulation effaced his name almost entirely. As the Indore Process moved outward into the British and American organic-farming movements, it became known simply as "the Indore method" or "Howard's method" (Barton GA, 2011), a contraction that preserved the place name while quietly dropping the named Indian collaborator and erasing the unnamed cultivators altogether. This is the first link in the chain this essay traces: a movement of knowledge from anonymous practice, through partial and asymmetric crediting, into an authorial structure organised entirely around a single, eventually knighted, British name.

It is this structure, already asymmetric before Gandhi ever cited it, that Gandhi's 1935 reprint draws on, extends and, this essay argues, partially reproduces.

Gandhi's Reception: The Harijan Reprint of 17 August 1935

On 17 August 1935, Gandhi's column in Harijan opened with the following note:

"There is in Indore an Institute of Plant Industry. It issues from time-to-time leaflets for those whom it is designed to serve. The first one of these describes the utility and the method of preparing compost manure from farm wastes. As it is valuable for Harijans and village workers who handle cattle-dung and night-soil, I copy below practically the whole of the leaflet incorporating footnotes into the running description of the process." (Gandhi MK, 1935a)

This note, and a second short item under the same heading, are reproduced in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi as item 488, "Compost Manure," on page 338 of Volume LXI. What follows immediately in the Collected Works, however, is not the leaflet itself. The CWMG editors append a footnote at exactly this point: "Not reproduced here; it appeared, in parts, in this and the following issue of Harijan" (Gandhi MK, 1935a). The fuller text of the leaflet, including its explicit attribution of the technique to "Mr. Albert Howard" and its citation of Howard and Wad's 1931 book by name, survives only in the original Harijan issues of 17 and 24 August 1935 and in later compilations such as the Navajivan Trust's Village Swaraj, not in the Collected Works as printed.

This editorial absence is itself significant, and worth pausing on before turning to what Gandhi did write. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi is, definitionally, a collection of Gandhi's own writing; a third party's leaflet, even one Gandhi chose to reproduce nearly in full and frame for a specific readership, falls outside that remit and was accordingly left out. But the effect of that editorial principle is to reproduce, one archival step further removed, exactly the asymmetry of

attention this essay is tracing in Gandhi's own act of reprinting. The institutional text that carried Howard's name into Harijan is judged not worth transcribing into the official record of Gandhi's collected writing; only Gandhi's own framing of it survives in the volume historians are most likely to consult. The compost technique, and the unnamed cultivators whose practice it systematised, are at two removes from the archive that future scholarship on Gandhi will, in the ordinary run of things, actually read.

The leaflet itself can nonetheless be read directly in the original Harijan, where it occupies the remainder of the page on which Gandhi's note appears and continues across the following two pages. Following a general account of the limitations of farmyard manure and green manuring under Indian conditions, the leaflet states its central claim of attribution without qualification: "The work carried out at the Institute of Plant Industry at Indore, which was the final outcome of twenty years' attempts by Mr. Albert Howard in this direction, has now proved definitely that these principles can very easily be put into actual practice. The Indore method of compost making supplies a practical technique and opens new avenues for development" (Gandhi MK, 1935a). For the elaboration of "the problems and underlying principles involved," the leaflet directs the reader to a 1931 Oxford University Press book by "Howard and Wad," cited in the leaflet itself, in a form looser than the book's actual published title, as "the Utilization of Agricultural Waste" (Gandhi MK, 1935a); the work in question is Howard and Wad's The Waste Products of Agriculture: Their Utilisation as Humus (Howard A *et al.,*1931). Gandhi's instruction to copy "practically the whole of the leaflet" was, on this evidence, a literal description of what he did: the attribution to Howard, and the citation of his book, travelled into Harijan completely.

The leaflet's own text, read directly alongside Gandhi's note, allows three observations about this act of brokerage. First, Gandhi does not claim the knowledge as his own, nor does he present it as simply "traditional" or "Indian" in an unspecified sense. He explicitly routes its authority through a named institution and a named British scientist; his own editorial labour is one of selection and audience-targeting, not of re-authorisation. The technique reaches Gandhi's village-reconstruction readership already carrying the institutional credibility of Howard's directorship and of the 1931 Oxford University Press book that the leaflet cites by name.

Second, Wad's name survives in this transmission only inside a citation embedded in the Institute's own leaflet text, which Gandhi reproduces without comment. Gandhi neither elaborates on Wad's role nor strikes out his name; he transmits the asymmetry that was already present in his source material. He does not, in this article, return to the unnamed cultivators whose observed practice was the technique's actual point of origin, even though Howard's own writing periodically and explicitly acknowledged that origin (Howard A, 1940). The leaflet Gandhi reprints is already several steps removed from the cultivators; Gandhi's intervention does not shorten that distance.

Third, and most significant for the argument of this study, Gandhi's authority to address "Harijans and village workers" on the subject of their own agricultural knowledge is, in this instance, secured by citing a colonial scientific institution back to them. The same week's Harijan column, immediately following the compost item, reproduced a note from the Director of the Haffkine Institute on snakebite treatment, addressed to the same readership of village co-workers (Gandhi MK, 1935a), a juxtaposition that suggests this was not an isolated rhetorical move but a settled feature of how Gandhi communicated technical authority to his rural constituency that year: expert institutional knowledge, mediated and re-addressed, rather than village knowledge affirmed on its own terms. The vindication of peasant knowledge, in the compost case, is delivered in the voice, and effectively under the letterhead, of the very scientific apparatus that the rhetoric of village reconstruction elsewhere positions itself against.

A further, corroborating trace of this same circulation survives later in 1935. Writing to Satis Chandra Das Gupta on 10 July 1935 about an unrelated dispute concerning khadi quality, Gandhi added: "As regards bones I appreciate the process adopted in Indore. Some nitrogen is of course wasted. But does it matter? If the bones are fired carefully, they can be easily ground in an ordinary mill" (Gandhi MK, 1935b). A CWMG footnote to this letter records that "Gandhiji had visited the plant earlier in April" (Gandhi MK, 1935b), confirming an April 1935 visit to an Indore institution concerned with the processing of agricultural and animal waste into manure, the same Institute of Plant Industry. An earlier letter to Narandas Gandhi, dated 26 April 1935, independently places Gandhi in Indore that month, attending a village crafts exhibition that the season's rain had partly damaged (Gandhi MK, 1935c). Neither letter mentions Howard by name, and neither should be read as more than corroboration that Gandhi's August endorsement of the Institute's leaflet followed a documented personal visit rather than a purely textual encounter.

The Asymmetry of Credit

Laid out sequentially, the credit structure traced above runs: unnamed cultivators, whose dispersed practice is observed and systematised, to Y. D. Wad, named as co-author but absorbed into "the Indore method" as a place name rather than a person, to Albert Howard, eventually knighted and internationally celebrated as the name that survives the technique's global circulation, to Gandhi, who cites Howard's institution and Howard's book by name to validate the practice of cultivators who themselves remain unnamed

throughout. A further, smaller asymmetry sits inside the leaflet's own technical detail, and Gandhi reproduces it without comment. Costing the process at Indore, the leaflet records rates of wages of "men 7 annas, women 5 annas per day of eight hours" (Gandhi MK, 1935a). Gandhi, who elsewhere insisted on the dignity of all labour and addressed this article explicitly to village workers, men and women among them, reprints this wage differential as part of the leaflet's economic case for the method, without remark. The leaflet's claim to scientific and economic authority and its own embedded wage hierarchy travel into Harijan together, unseparated by Gandhi's editorial hand. This asymmetry sits uneasily against the more general claims, surveyed above, that Gandhi's epistemic politics rejected the hierarchy between expert and layperson (Nandy A, 1987; Sahoo S, 2022). It does not refute those claims; Gandhi's stated commitment to treating community workers as scientists in their own right, rather than mere technicians, is real and well documented elsewhere in his writing. But the 1935 Harijan episode shows that commitment operating under a constraint the existing literature on Gandhian Science has not, so far as this study can establish, examined directly: Gandhi's capacity to present village knowledge as scientifically validated, as opposed to merely traditional or merely asserted, depended in this instance on an expert authority external to the village, articulated through exactly the kind of credentialed, institutional, colonial science that his rhetoric elsewhere treats as suspect.

This tension has a further dimension that the historiography of Gandhi's rural reconstruction programme has approached mainly through the politics of caste rather than the politics of knowledge, and the two cannot be separated here. Gandhi addressed the compost leaflet specifically to "Harijans and village workers who handle cattle-dung and night-soil" in August 1935, at the height of the period in which his confrontation with B. R. Ambedkar over the political status of Untouchability was at its most acute. Ambedkar had, in the preceding years, organised the Mahad satyagrahas over Untouchable access to public tanks and temple roads, rejected Gandhi's framing of caste pollution as a removable rather than a birth-ascribed condition, and pressed, against Gandhi's 1932 fast unto death, for separate political representation (Sarkar T, 2011). As Tanika Sarkar's account of this period makes clear, Gandhi's preferred resolution placed the burden, and with it the privilege, of transformation on upper-caste penance, a structure Sarkar describes as "a return to hierarchy on a higher plane" even as it claimed to dignify the labour Untouchables actually performed (Sarkar T, 2011). Read against this immediate political context, Gandhi's compost article, which dignifies the handling of cattle-dung and night-soil as a matter of cutting-edge agricultural science while never naming a single Harijan practitioner, repeats at the level of agricultural knowledge exactly the structure Ambedkar was contesting at the level of caste status: labour and knowledge both rendered valuable in the abstract, and both still withheld from individuation in the particular.

A Second Case: The Charkha Design Competitions of 1920 and 1929

A structurally similar pattern of brokered, externally adjudicated validation appears in a different technical register in the All-India Spinners' Association's open competitions for an improved charkha. The earlier of the two traces to an announcement in Navajivan on 5 October 1919, offering a prize, donated by Sjt. Revashankar Jagjivan Jhaveri, of Rs. 5,000 for an improved model of the indigenous spinning wheel, with the competition itself to be held at Ahmedabad on 31 March 1920 (Gandhi MK, 1919, as cited in Gandhi MK, 1920). Writing to Maganlal Gandhi, the Ashram's technical evaluator for the competition, on 17 March 1920, Gandhi wrote: "You may extend the time limit for the spinning-wheel if you wish to, but I think the reply you have given is all right. We will give the man something if his model is good" (Gandhi MK, 1920). The attempt, on Gandhi's own later account, failed to produce a winning design (Gandhi MK, 1929). In 1929, the same donor returned to the project on a far larger scale. Gandhi's own retrospective account, published in Young India on 1 August 1929, recalled that "some years ago" Jhaveri had offered the earlier Rs. 5,000 prize for a wheel that would do for spinners "what Singer's Sewing Machine does for the housewife," that a skilled craftsman had been admitted to the Ashram and given every facility to attempt it, and that "the attempt however failed." Jhaveri had now, Gandhi reported, persuaded the Council of the All-India Spinners' Association to announce a prize large enough to attract "even the Western inventors": Rs. 1,00,000, or "its present equivalent (roughly) £7,700," a figure Gandhi promised would hold regardless of currency fluctuation (Gandhi MK, 1929). The detailed advertisement specifying the technical conditions of the competition, like the Indore leaflet four years later, was published "elsewhere" in the same issue and is not reproduced in the Collected Works; some secondary accounts of this advertisement describe specific conditions, including an eight-hour operating capacity for a woman user, a twenty-year service life, and transfer of patent rights to the Charkha Sangh, and name a judging panel including Satis Chandra Das Gupta and C. Rajagopalachari, both established correspondents of Gandhi's in this period.

The Singer Sewing Machine comparison Gandhi used in 1929 was not a one-off figure of speech. Elsewhere in his writing on machinery, Gandhi praised the Singer Sewing Machine at length as an example of a machine invented "with love at its back," and used it to argue that mechanisation was compatible with his principles wherever it served, rather than displaced, the individual worker (Weber T, 2011). The charkha competitions, on this reading, were an attempt to engineer precisely this kind of machine into existence for the spinner that the Singer had, in Gandhi's view, already

become for the seamstress: an open call for technical knowledge from anonymous, dispersed inventors, to be judged and certified by a small panel before it could be admitted into the nationalist constructive programme.

What both charkha competitions share with the Indore Process case is a structure in which technical knowledge offered by dispersed contributors required validation by a named, credentialed panel before it could be incorporated into Gandhi's wider movement. Gandhi's own role in both cases is adjudicative rather than originary: he does not claim to have invented the improved charkha any more than he claims to have invented the Indore Process, but in both cases his authority, or the authority of those he appointed, was required to convert a dispersed body of technical claims into something the movement could certify and use.

CONCLUSION

The term Knowledge Swaraj already names a real and influential intellectual project: the 2011 manifesto's call for a plural, civil-society-rooted science answerable to justice rather than to state or expert authority alone, and the decade of scholarship and activism that C. Shambu Prasad and others have built around it (KICS, 2011; Prasad CS *et al.,*2022). This essay has not offered a new theory to set against that one. It has offered a single, dated, archivally grounded case of Gandhi performing something that might be called knowledge validation, in order to ask what such an act actually looked like in practice rather than what it ought to look like as a normative aspiration. What it looked like, in August 1935, was this: a colonial institute's leaflet, reproduced nearly in full by Gandhi for an audience of Harijans and village workers, citing a British scientist's twenty years of work and a co-authored Oxford University Press book, in order to certify that the village already possessed scientific knowledge, an act of certification the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi itself, in choosing not to transcribe the leaflet, has subsequently underscored rather than corrected. The certification was genuine in the sense that Gandhi evidently believed it and acted on it, returning to related questions of agricultural waste at Indore again that July. But it was not symmetrical. It ran through exactly the credentialing structures, institutional, racial and, as the same year's confrontation with Ambedkar suggests, caste-coded as well, that an unqualified reading of "knowledge swaraj" as self-rule in knowledge would lead one to expect Gandhi to have circumvented. The charkha competitions of 1920 and 1929 suggest this was not a single lapse but a recurring feature of how Gandhi's constructive programme processed technical knowledge more broadly.

This is not a reason to abandon the term Knowledge Swaraj, or the manifesto that uses it. It is a reason to use it more carefully than either Gandhi's admirers, or this study's own title, risk doing. Gandhi's knowledge politics, on the evidence of this case, were less a democratisation of expertise than a renegotiation, partial, asymmetric and dependent on borrowed colonial authority, of whose validation was required before village knowledge could be heard as knowledge at all. Future research could extend this argument by establishing whether the same pattern of brokered validation recurs in Gandhi's engagement with other technical domains, such as the indigenous medical knowledge his critique of vivisection invoked.

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