



a guide to the basic facts and themes of
Dreaming It Forward



Mr. Vijay Kumar Handa, October 2017

Dreaming Companion

a guide to the basic facts and themes of

Dreaming It Forward

by Aaron Sinift in collaboration with
Kahkashan Khan, Jitendra Kumar,
Mr. Vijay Kumar Handa

Spring 2024



Beacon, NY. USA
Vyaspur, Uttar Pradesh, India

A guide to the basic facts and themes
of Dreaming It Forward

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*Kabir kahe pukar ke, do baat likh le!
kar ssahib ki bandagii, bhukho ko kucch de!!*

Kabir calls out, write two things down,
Worship god and feed the hungry

*pothi padh padh jag mua, pandit bhayaa na koy
Dhaaii akshar prem kaa, padhe so pandit hoy*

The world died of reading tomes,
no one turned out wise;
From the single word of 'love',
wisdom will arise.

Kabir (1398-1448 CE)

~~~

Dedicated to Bina & Vijay Kumar Handa  
Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha,

New Delhi

Kabir translation by Andrew Harvey

DEDICATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Gandhi ashram cotton cloth (khadi), is a primary symbol of India's Independence, and its manufacture provides a means of sustaining self-sufficiency for millions of India's most vulnerable citizens. For followers of Gandhi, the act of spinning is also a spiritual practice, the intersecting warp and weft of homespun khadi creates the context for understanding the life stories that are spun into these threads, which are then woven into this collective story cloth you can hold in your hands.

This khadi book is also about the small family farms that grow organic cotton in India, the largest producer of cotton in the world. It is about the Gandhi service ashrams who support their struggle to maintain self-sufficiency and preserve their homes and way of life. It is worth noting that most people involved in the making of this book are themselves farmers or the children of farmers.

Jitendra Kumar and Kahkashan Khan traveling from their village of Vyasapur, Uttar Pradesh (U.P), created a series of working relationships with farmers, *sarvodaya* (universal uplift) workers, and Gandhi inspired *seva* (service) organizations across India to grow and create this unique *swadeshi* (village self-sufficient and self-reliant) collective artwork. They visited Wardha, Maharashtra, and with the help of

sarvodaya workers at Gram Seva Mandal (GSM) (Farm Service Society, est. 1934 by Vinoba Bhave), started the collaboration with two small farm families in Umri village. This book was literally grown from seeds to present a sustainable organic alternative as acted upon by farmers at their own initiative.

The growth of this cotton in the field was documented in a time lapse film from July to Dec. 2021.

*(YouTube: Aaron Sinift)*

Jitendra and Kahkashan located some of the last vestiges of home spinners, small ashram communities scattered across India, and coordinated distribution of cotton slivers to them beginning February 2022. About a hundred people spun this cotton into thread for 6 months. After the slivers were spun into thread, it was then consolidated and woven by five different service ashrams across India. From 1000 kg of raw organic desi cotton, 3.5 million meters of thread were spun in the home to create the pages of this book.

Most of the labor embodied in this book is by women tending the fields manually through the 6-8 month growing season beginning around June, and then the hard labor of picking cotton, and then through the meticulous hand labor of processing raw cotton and the patience of spinning it on a *charkha* (spinning wheel) at home. This in addition to their domestic duties.



The Dreaming It Forward Project was a lifeline to all of us who participated, providing us all with hope and a sense of purpose during the global Covid pandemic. Life and work must go on for the farmer and the subsistence laborer, so with the generosity of a private patron we were able to fund a project that took from June 2021 until spring of 2024 to complete. The project has paid essential wages to dozens of artisans and paid commissions to artists to create works, and it helped sustain 100 families for 6 months just with hand spinning alone. 13 weaver families created the khadi, including 4 printers, 4 block cutters, 6+ tailors, and about 50 embroiderers. Literally hundreds of people were involved at some point in its creation, and the vast majority of our budget went directly to paying workers wages.

Dreaming It Forward is about process.

Allow a conclusion to come.

Allow an awareness of value.

Give strength to those who must carry on.

We thank Keris Salmon and Frank Williams for their visionary support and by our actions may we honor the equal dignity and interdependence of all people

Aaron Sinift

*Beacon NY, March 31st, 2024*

*A long form essay/book is being written to more fully explain the project.*

# Artworks in order of appearance

*all artworks have been reproduced as woodblock prints by Chinmoyee Kala Niketan (CKN) unless otherwise noted.*

*single colored threads indicate which ashram wove the khadi cloth throughout the book.*

**Blue:** Magan Sangrahalaya, Wardha

**Orange:** Vishwa Manav Seva, W.Champaran Bihar

**(No color, DT):** Sevapuri (KGSS), Varanasi

**Brown:** Tana Bana Trust : Vyaspur/Varanasi; Nizamuddin

**(no color, Finest) :** Andhra Fine Khadi, Ponduru

**FRONT COVER:** Dreaming It Forward, Aaron Sinift, Urdu text; Photo inspiration via Madhu Sudan, a dalit/ adivasi activist in Odisha, Ig: @madhuodisha7  
Kantha hand embroidery by Street Survivors India, Murshidabad, W.Bengal  
Spine Zardozi hand embroidery by Al Fazal, Varanasi UP.

**1-2 Introduction Pgs.** Aaron Sinift(AS) screenprint (CKN) & pocket on page 2 with Dreaming Companion

**3-4 Umri Map,** Madhukar Parteki, (text AS, Sanket Aher) *Regional details on pg. 14*

**5 Song of the Village,** Laxman Aelay

**6 Traveling Musician**, Sham Bhaskar Rao Nagmode

**7 Moreshwar Sirsam Family Portrait**,

Jalandharnath Channole

Portrait of Sirsam family (left-r) Rushikesh (son), Kalpana (mother), Moreshwar (father), Ambika (or Antika, one of twin daughters) in front of their home in Umri. Since 2010, Moreshwar has embraced organic farming and on their 10 acres they grow ginger, garlic, turmeric, veg, and wheat for sustenance, along with cotton as their cash crop. Their example has inspired neighbor Mahesh Parteki to switch to organic methods. *Interview with Moreshwar on pg. 25*

**8 Surykanta & Sons**, Aaron Sinift

Portrait of Surykanta Parteki and her sons Mahesh & Rishukesh. In 2020 they adopted organic farming for their 4.5 acres of land due to health concerns from chemical pesticides/fertilizers, and to benefit from the heightened resilience of desi (local) seed strains, and the significantly higher prices for organic cotton. (approx double vs. conventional BT cotton prices) Their cotton is called “trans-cotton” because it would not be certified as organic until 2024. Transitioning to organic takes 3 years and is characterized by sharp initial declines in crop yield as the soil recovers, gradually improving in health & fertility. This transition period of economic loss inhibits many farmers from switching to more sustainable organic farming. Rishukesh works in a foundry in Pune to provide additional financial support to the family. *Mahesh has been accepted into the*

*Maharashtra police force as of June 2023.*

*Interview with Mahesh on pg. 15 & 32*

**9 Surykanta (sunflower),** Uday Pratap Paul

The various duties of a woman and mother begin before sun up til well past sundown.

*Interview with Surykanta on pg. 21*

**10 Kisan,** Jagdish Prasad Jaisawal

The process of vakharani (preparing the soil for planting) just before the monsoons. *Details on page 17*

**11 Ox,** John Coyne

**12 Farming Scroll,** Tagar & Laltu Chitrakar

*Chitrakar Patua* are traditional storytellers of Hindu/Muslim syncretism (between orthodoxies) who travel between villages, entertaining & educating with their *patachitra* (scrolls) which traditionally illustrate a song composed by the Patua. This selection of 4 panels of a 10 panel scroll depicts the stages of cotton farming following *vakharani* (plowing), seeds are individually sown, the monsoon rain must fall within 2 weeks, seedlings are tended and weeded continually between June-December. A short video of this scroll's song being performed by Khabu Chitrakar of West Midnapore, W. Bengal is viewable, with translation on *instagram: @otherimaginings*

**13 Kheti Bari (Farming is Great)** Sri Gandhi Ashram

Jhola (sling bag) artwork by unknown sarvodaya worker, cir. 70s, U.P.

**14 Cotton Hands**, Jiyeon Park

**15 A Kindred Understanding**, Shauntrice Martin & Shahanaz Ali

**16 Cotton Farming Text**, A.S, screenprint (CKN).

**17 Mother Tree**, Pushpa Kumari

**18 Harvest Hands**, Pakhi Sen

**19 Conjointly We Prosper**, Beldan Sezen

**20 Trucking**, Anthony Carlos Molden

**21 Inquilab**, Orijit Sen

Inquilab Zindabad (Urdu: داب دینز بالقزبا; Hindi: इंकलाब ज़िंदाबाद) is a Hindustani phrase, which translates to "Long live the revolution".

**22 Gram Seva Mandal (GSM) (Farm Service Society)**, anonymous sarvodaya artist

GSM was established in 1934 by Vinobha Bhave, a devotee of M.K. Gandhi, to serve local farmers through a wide variety of initiatives including cotton processing, spinning & weaving of khadi, as well as education to encourage the adoption of organic farming. Karuna Futane was director (d.2023). For more information: [gramsewamandal.com](http://gramsewamandal.com) /instagram @gramsewamandalgopuri

**23 COVID Migration**, Shahnaz Ali

Beginning May 28, 2020, an estimated 10-35 million interstate migrants walked home or used unusual means of transport during the first wave of Covid-19 lockdowns.

**24 Langar Seva** (Free Kitchen Service), Rajiv Gautam

**25 Farmers Protest of 2020-21** Tagar & Laltu  
Chitrakar

**26 The Door**, Uday Pratap Paul

**27 Manual Scavenging**, Shahnaz Ali

**28 Between Disillusionment and Burning Peace**,  
Hena Chakraborty

**29 Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha (GHSS)** New Delhi, Hena Chakraborty. Founded in 1973 to serve the educational needs of their community, Mr & Mrs Handa and other sarvodaya workers also organize to provide food and services to elderly and indigent families. GHSS mobilized 17 home spinners to produce thread that was woven into this book.

**30 Motherland**, Halah Khan

یک یترهد سا ہیہ سیئی ام مہ

یک رومسج ے رامہ ل صرف ہی

we are the mothers of this land  
this is the harvest of our bodies

**31 Marassa**, Soulé Déesse,

**32 Sandeep Nagar (Dairy)**, Narmada Gond & Aaron Sinift

“Sandeep Nagar; Manthithoppu Transgender Milk Producers Society (MTMPS)” The two-acre land is a housing colony for about 85 trans persons and comes with a dairy farm also run by them. Spearheaded by trans activist Grace Banu, she said “This has been our dream project which we pursued relentlessly for about seven years and it has come to fruition now. While the previous district administrations have not been helpful, the present Collector has been our main support. To thank him, we have named the colony after him, as Sandeep Nagar.” *For more information about Grace’s work: Instagram: @gracebanu*

**33 Home Spinning Map** A.S, screenprint (CKN)

**34 Spinner**, Duncan Tonatiuh

**35 Ponduru Processes: Combing, Ginning, Cleaning, Stuffing, Roving**

Uday Pratap Paul

**36 Ponduru Processes: portrait of K.Sarojani, Sliver, Spinning, Thread Count, Hank**

Uday Pratap Paul

### **37 Ponduru Processes: Street Warping, Warp Combing, Starch Spraying, Sizing**

Uday Pratap Paul

### **38 Thirteen Weavers** Murali Nagapuzha & AS

*No-one can understand  
The mystery of the Great Weaver  
Who made the universe  
The frame, and spread the warp.  
While you were busy, pandit,  
With your Vedas and Puranas,  
I spread my warp  
And wove some cloth.  
The Weaver made a loom  
Of earth and heaven  
And runs it with shuttles Of sun and moon.  
Kabir rubbed starch into his warp  
Made it firm and straight  
And his poor weaver's mind  
Grew serene and still.  
Kabir the weaver  
Has known his true home-  
Within his body's house  
He's realized Him.  
Kabir says: Listen, friend,  
I've broken my loom  
And joined my thread with His.*

*Kabir (1398-1448 CE)*



**39 Motherhood & Responsibilities**

Pradyumna Kumar

**40 Thank You Artists** A.S. screenprint (CKN)

**41 Thank You Project Partners & Supporters** A.S.

**42 Magan Sangrahalaya/Sevagram**

Sham Bhaskar Rao Nagmode

**43 Tana BanaTrust,** Shahanaz Ali

**44 Mother and the 5 Elements,** Alyen Foning

**BACK COVER Baby Tree,** Amrita Jha

Kantha embroidery by Street Survivors India,

Murshidabad, W Bengal

## **Agricultural Background of Wardha District in Maharashtra,** by Sanket Aher

Wardha is an agricultural district with a 13 lakh population (1.3 million). Around 79% of the total workforce of the district is dependent on agriculture (49% are cultivators and 30% are



**Mahesh Parteki & Sanket Aher**

photo by Jitendra Kumar

agricultural laborers). 80% of agricultural land is covered under cotton and soybean. Cotton is the main cash crop grown in the region and cotton cultivation accounts for about one-third of the total cultivated land in the district.

Agriculture is the major livelihood source of more than 80% of the population in Wardha. However, farmers are suffering from economic distress and often committing suicide. An increasing number of small and marginal operational holdings, and the rainfed and seasonal nature of farming have created

many issues before farmers. The income generated from farming was insufficient to meet the consumption expenditure of suicide victims families. The per capita income of 50 suicide victim farmers was found to be less than below the poverty line (BPL) and 50% per cent of these families had a maximum double of BPL. Moreover, victims had become indebted and committed suicide for the permanent outcome of relief from the pressure of debt. Nationally, approx 10,000 farmers commit suicide annually in India.

*There are 6.5 million cotton farmers in India, of whom 85% have less than 3.7 acres for subsistence and cash crops. (ed.)*

### **Farmer Introduction:**

**Meet the Farmers**, by Sanket Aher

**Mahesh Krushanaji Parteki** is a 23 year old, dynamic and educated farmer. He has completed his graduation with a diploma in education. Mahesh, his mother Surykanta, and young brother Rishukesh belong to the Gond Tribe. Mahesh's father passed away in an accident ten years ago. Thereafter, Mahesh's mother carried all farming works alone, but now Mahesh has taken responsibility for the last four years.

They are owners of four and a half acre land. They grow two crop seasons in one year. In the *kharif* season (i.e. monsoon or autumn): cotton, soybeans,

and *toor* (cereal). During *rabbi* (winter), wheat or *gram* (cereal) depending on water availability. Every year they required Rs.30,000 (375 USD) for farming overhead costs, apart from their labor. After selling a produce crop, they would get Rs.50-60,000 (625-750 USD). It is not sufficient income for a three-member family, therefore the younger brother Rishukesh migrated to Pune as factory labor to send money home. They were arranging loans for agriculture through local moneylenders, doing labor work, and sometimes mortgaging utensils or gold jewelry. Because of this, Mahesh has aspirations to get a government job or start a village level business related to agriculture, his experience is that 4.5-acre farming can't ensure quality life and he needs a new approach. He joined the Dreaming It Forward project because he loves to see that someone is documenting in-farm and capturing information about farming. It feels like a farmer as a hero.

Question: What do you do in the field during the early morning?

Mahesh: Every morning, I come to the farm and switch off the solar fencing electricity. After, I round the field and inspect to see if any wild animals entered the farm at night. (He is observing footprints)

Then he shared about the solar powered electric fencing system. He climbs the scaffold and shows how he installed the fencing system in the scaffold with solar panels at the top of it. From the scaffold tower,

he laid metal wire along field boundaries and delivered electricity to it. This electricity won't injure animals, but it shocks them, and they don't enter the field. The wild boar, *nilgai* (wild animals like a cow), and deer are the primary animals which try to enter the farm.

Mahesh is growing soybean and cotton crops in his field, starting his agricultural activities in the summer. First, they plow the field and then spread cow dung as fertilizer. After the first rain, farmers initiate *vakharani* (process to loosen soil) and then individually sow seeds by the token sowing method. The seeds are treated with locally available materials (cow urine, dung, lime) to increase germination. It is the first stage of work.

The weeds are controlled by removing them by hand or *davarni* (harrow). The *davran* is pulled through by a pair of oxen every 8-10 days. I will share a video about it (*see: YouTube Aaron Sinift*). Removing weeds is a key process to enhance the growth of cotton. If farmers ignore it then it directly reduces plant growth and cotton production.

*Davarni* is the best and most cost-effective way to control farm weeds (invasive grasses). The pair of oxen is connected to the front side of *davra*, a machine made up of wood. Every 10-12 days, Mahesh pays Rajendra Parteki to perform *davran* on his farm because he doesn't have a pair of oxen for creating good soil conditions.

Mahesh has to do various sprays every 10-12 days. As an organic farmer, he uses organic sprays to control pests and improve plant growth. All of these sprays are made by using locally available natural remedies. The *Jivamrut*, *Ghananmrut*, *Bramhastra*, *Agniatra* fishing oil are sprays that are used for cotton. They don't need to spend money but have to spend time preparing them. Mahesh did jivamrut spraying till now. In the last phase when cotton balls are maturing, farmers have to secure them from wild animals. Farm laborers work on farms to collect cotton balls. Finally, after farmers sell their cotton into the market, they clear the spent cotton plant from the fields and use it as cooking fuel..

### **Ecology & land:**

Why did you switch to organic cotton?

In chemical farming, Mahesh finds that expenses are higher and net profit is less. He switched to organic farming because overhead expenses are less compared to chemical farming. The second reason is that he has an assured buyer in Wardha. (Some organizations and companies purchase organic cotton from farmers like Mahesh with a 10-20% hike in the current market rate)

Has growing organic cotton been good for your farm?

M: The growing of organic cotton mainly improves soil quality i.e. soil carbon.

Have you noticed changes in climate and weather? If so, what kind of changes?

M: He notices the frequency and intensity of rain is changing. This year, there is a 15-20 day gap between rain and sunny days during the rainy season that is not usual and it is directly affecting crop production. Apart from it, he observed higher insect attacks in cotton last year, which reduced cotton production 40-50%.

Q & A :

Sanket: What is your mother's name?

Mahesh: Surykanta Krushnaji Parteki

How old is she?

M: 43 years

Does she have sisters and brothers?

M: Three brothers and three sisters.

What did her father do?

M: Farming

Where does her birth family live?

M: 40 Km from Umari in a village named Susund, block Karanja, Dist. Wardha.

When did she marry?

M: At the age of 17-18.

What is her husband's name?

M: Krushanaji Parteki

What is her education level?

M: 9th class

Can she read?

M: Yes

Does she like farm life?

M: Yes

What is your daily diet?

M: Wheat, rice, pulses (mostly tur and gram), meat, seasonal vegetables: *brinjal* (eggplant) and potato are highly consumed vegetables.

What is her daily work routine?

M: She wakes up in the early morning and cooks food for the family. Then she completes household chores. Around 10 o'clock, she comes to the farm and carries on her work at the farm, mostly until 5 o'clock. During the evening, spend time for dinner with family or meet her friends in the village



**Surykanta Krushnaji Parteki**

interviewed by Kahkashan Khan

Who is the strongest woman in the village that she likes?

S- Ranjana Parteki, Because she is educated and she created a self-help group and also helps us to provide loans from the bank.

Who seems to lead in organizing women?

S- Ranjana Parteki (self-help group organizer), Sunanda Kailash Parteki, *sarpanch* (mayor) of the village.

Are there any women artists in or near Umari?

S- No

What is the role of women in agriculture?

S- The *main* role from beginning to end, along with managing household and family.

How do women balance family and agricultural work?

S- Women sacrifice their comfort zone to balance work and home accordingly. They wake up early in the morning and go to bed last.

What is her daily routine from morning to sleep?

S- Wake up before sunrise, wash dishes and clothes, bathe, clean the house, prepare food for the family, then go to the farm, come back in the evening before sunset, prepare dinner for the family and do the remaining house work till going to sleep.

Transportation to the fields, how far, how long?

S- Walking distance of 1 km

Where is women's time spent?

S- They don't have spare time to spend on themselves, but on occasions, they find ways to spend their time.

How is education of children managed? Getting to school and feeding?

S- She cook food in the morning, then the children go to school, then she leaves for the farm, then after school the children return and feed themselves.

Women's health? How is it managed?

S- Women don't care for themselves first. When they get sick they call their relatives to take care of them till they are coming back to normal.



**Surykanta Krushnaji Parteki**  
photo by Uday Pratap Paul

If the woman is sick, how is the work done? How are animals cared for?

S- When they get sick they call their relatives to take care of them till they return back to normal and the work they managed by themselves.

*(Kahkashan says: “they still have to maintain the family, never take rest. They work in the field even when pregnant, sometimes delivering their children in the field while they work.”*

How are women and their families affected by suicides?

S- There are no suicide cases in the Umri village. But my husband died when my second child Rishukesh was just 10. One day he was invited to a family occasion which was held in his sister’s house and accidentally he fell down from the roof. The information I get from her side.

**Moreshwar Sirsam** interviewed  
by Jitendra Kumar

10 years organic, inspiration to  
Mahesh Parteki  
10 acres, grows ginger, garlic,  
turmeric, veg, wheat, cotton

In 10 years of organic farming,  
how has the land changed? Is  
there a difference?

M- after 10 years of organic  
farming the soil became softer  
and more fertile.



**Moreshwar Sirsam**

Is climate change real for you? How has it affected  
farming for you?

M-yes climate change is very real for me because it  
seems like the seasonal cycle is disturbed. We had  
unexpectedly heavy rains this year, due to that the  
production was affected by 55% (20 quintals expected  
but harvested 9 quintals only in 2 acre) (1 quintal =  
100 lb/45 kg)

Is organic cotton growing cost effective for you?

M- Yes, it is very cost effective. Before organic farming

I had to spend Rs.25,000 (\$312 USD) + costing for 1 acre land but now I spend Rs.5,000 (\$62 USD) only, and with better production as well.

Is the cotton harvest this season successful?

M- Not successful in comparison to the previous year. But I get the average profit.

Are you in the red? How much did you lose or gain?

M- No, I'm not in red. I gained an average profit but if I was able to harvest the expected amount of cotton, I would have good profit.

What was the time investment?

M- Average time 10 hr/per day and cotton crop season is 8 months.

How have farmer suicides affected you personally?

M- I am aware of this matter which I saw and heard on television that sounds very bad.

How have families had to deal with the loss of the men who kill themselves?

M- They have to accept the truth and also be aware of the situation, and get support from the community

and relatives.

What are the family to family supports to prevent suicide among farmers?

M- Due to communication gap or maybe due to some circumstances, farmers often avoid sharing their problems with their family. In our community we create a bond between farmer to farmer and family. We share our issues with each other and try to cope with the situation.

What do you think of the farm protests?

M- It was good for farmers.

Do you sympathize with the protesters?

M- Yes

What are the right demands?

M- I don't know about this.

What do you see in the future for yourself and your children?

M- I'm doing my duty as a father. I put my efforts toward children and family. Whatever they want to become, it's up to them.

What would you like future generations to know about you and your family?

M- I would like to convey the message that our future generation should practice organic farming.

What are we doing? How can we do better?

M- No comments.

What is the impact of our project on your present situation?

M- There's not much impact in my present situation but I feel overwhelmed that the outsiders have come to the village to understand organic farming.

Are we asking the right questions of you?

M- I don't know

You are featured in the book. It is a collaboration with you.

M- Thank you!



## **HARVEST NOTES, DEC. 21, 2021** by Jitendra Kumar

Done harvesting; cotton arrives at Gram Seva Mandal (GSM) on Thursday.

Kartik will help, measure and weigh, upload to the lorry, take notes and videos and go to GSM.

Moreshwarji harvested **500 kg**.

Maheshji & Satykantji harvested **210 kg**.

(project cotton deficit of 290 kg, required that organic desi cotton be sourced from Trivedi in Punjab)

**Moreshwar's** success is due to his 10 years experience and that he spends 10-12 hours a day in his fields, practicing "3 sisters" style agriculture. He also has bulls so he is more independent and cost effective by doing everything himself. His crop was 55% less this year due to heavy rains. He still makes a profit this year but not as in better years. His total cultivation expense is Rp. 5000 for the season.

**Mahesh's** harvest can be better in 1-2 years after transition to full organic. This year was a 66% loss due to heavy rains. This loss was anticipated due to the transit cotton issue and expected to persist for another year or two while the soil recovers.

He must also hire a bullock team to *daravan* his crop (weeding w/plow); and hire contract labor to weed and harvest the cotton. Surykant also does contract work with neighboring farmers (as well as her own) to make additional money for the household.

For this reason his focus is on studying for govt exams. He aspires to a Class C job (clerk; coordinator) (classes are: A-D; lowest being custodial/labor). About 60% of India is employed in the agricultural sector and the work is considered “informal sector”. Only 1% of India works a government job so it is very competitive, he is hoping that his status as *adivasi* (tribal) will help him as such jobs have reservations (*similar to ‘affirmative action’ in the US, ed*). He is staying in Warda while his mother minds the farm with his younger brother Rushikesh.

Rushukesh had to leave his factory job in Pune due to Covid layoffs but plans to return when the pandemic lifts so he can resume sending cash home to the family. He does not like his job, it is only a matter of survival.

Mahesh’s farming expenses:

Field preparation (plowing etc) = Rp. 4200

Contract labor whole season(weeding)= Rp.7000

Seeds = Rp. 1800

Sowing by 4 people = Rp. 2000  
Organic fertilizer (Jivamarit)= Rp. 1500  
Spraying= Rp. 400  
Daravan x4 = Rp 6000  
Fish amino acids = Rp.500  
Insecticides (Agnirtra) = Rp. 500  
Harvest and hand picking = Rp.2000

TOTAL investment expense: Rp. 25,900

Total Yield = 210 kg trans-cotton / 462 lbs.

Investment cost to Mahesh per kg/lb. of organic cotton  
= Rp. 124 per kg./ \$0.56 USD per lb.

Market price (+20%) received: Rp. 180 per kg / \$1.00  
USD per lb.

= Rp. 37,800 gross income (\$473. USD)

- Rp. 25,900 investment (\$324. USD)

= Rp. 11,900 net profit (\$149. USD)

Drought and then heavy rains reduced crop yields in 2021, this trend was mirrored in many places around the world, a sign that climate change is here. As a result we fell short of our 1000kg. goal (required for our edition) and had to supplement with 290 kg from Punjab, which was 100% hand processed without machines into khadi in Ponduru, Srikakulam Dist. Andhra Pradesh

Postscript June 2, 2023

**Mahesh Parteki**

“Now at mid of 2023, there is a success story of Mahesh, he succeeded to qualify for Maharashtra State Police constable as he dreamed of wearing an Army uniform! He gratitudes the Dreaming It Forward project as a fortune for his successful life journey! He is really a real life example of hardwork and dedicated struggle in very tough and destitute situation!”

Jitendra Kumar



## PROJECT FACTS

### **Cotton Harvested**

210 kg Surykanta / Umri, Wardha Dist.,  
Maharashtra, Dec 2021 (8 months work)  
500 kg Moreshwar / Umri, Wardha Dist.,  
Maharashtra, Dec 2021 (8 months work)  
= kg. 710 @ Rp.180 per kg (20% over market  
rate, approx \$2.25 per kg / approx \$1.00 per  
lb) + each family received a bonus Rp.19,000  
(approx \$240.)

+290 kg. Rupsi Garg / Bhatinda, Punjab  
(sourced due to shortfall in Umri)  
Total = kg. 290 = Rs. 52,200 = \$743. (\$1.80  
per kg. / \$0.81 per lb.)  
TOTAL = 1000 kg. raw desi organic cotton

### **Home Spinning & Weaving**

*Handspinning slivers of processed Umri cotton  
were distributed to these ashrams for home  
spinning on charkhas, then the thread was  
woven into khadi at the respective ashrams.  
Spinners seem to make approx Rp.150-250 per  
4-7hr day (+cash bonus Rp.1000 at Diwali,  
October) Weavers seem to make approx. Rp. 300  
per day (+cash bonus Rp.1000 at Diwali, October)*

**Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha**, New Delhi  
Received 30 kg slivers, to make homespun

thread, which was sent to to Magan Sangrahalaya Wardha and Tana Bana Trust for weaving.

**Tana Bana Trust** Vyasapur/ Varanasi/ Chandauli U.P received 5 kg. thread from GHSS & produced 5 kg of its own thread for weaving resulting in 70 m (x 42”) homespun khadi woven by Nizamuddin

**Vishwa Manav Seva Ashram (VMS)** West Champaran, Bihar  
Received 50 kg slivers, resulting in 258 m (x 42”) homespun khadi

**Krishak Gramodhyog Sansthan Sevapuri (KGSS)** Sirihira Sevapuri, Varanasi UP.  
Received 62 kg. slivers, resulting in 272 m (x 40”) homespun khadi

**Magan Sangrahalaya Samiti (MSS)** Wardha, MH  
Received 42 kg. Slivers and 30 kg. homespun thread from GHSS, resulting in 320 m (x 42”) homespun khadi

**Andhra Fine Khadi Karmikabhivrudhi Sangam (AFKKS)** Ponduru-Srikakulam Dist. A.P.  
Received 300 kg. raw organic desi cotton sourced from Punjab  
Resulting in 610 m (x 54”) homespun khadi

1000 kg. of raw organic desi cotton resulted in approx 3.5 million meters of homespun thread; 3.5 million meters of thread was woven into 1530 m of homespun khadi, approx one mile.

### **WOOD BLOCK PRINTING**

Work began March 1st, 2022, completed April 1st 2024  
39 artworks were reproduced as hand cut woodblock prints by Chinmoyee Kala Niketan (CKN)

181 blocks were required for edition, each requiring 10-14 days to complete by Ram Prakash Vishwakarma age 64, Chauharja Prasad 63, Shivpal Singh 51, and Brijpal Singh 62

Each block cost approx Rp. 2160

An additional 7 text pages were screen-printed (CKN)  
Master printer: Kanhaiya Pal Ji (5 family members)  
Assistant printer (print/color fill-ins): Mohamad Iqbal (10 family-2 earners)  
Assistant printer: Saurabh Gautam, age 26 (7 family-1 earner)  
Supervisor/colors: Ajay (9 family-2 earners)

Up to 5 color printing charge is Rs. 200 per meter.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Primary Circle:**

**Kahkashan Khan and Jitendra Kumar** live with their two children in the village of Vyaspur across the Ganga from Varanasi U.P. India. They met through their work with World Literacy Canada doing educational outreach in small villages, teaching women basic literacy, mathematics, and their basic rights as citizens. They founded Tana Bana Trust India in 2009 to empower women in their immediate community through programs of social activism and job skills training. They began work on “Other Imaginings” with Aaron Sinift/5YearPlan.org (5YP) working remotely from the US in 2013. “Dreaming It Forward” was begun in 2017, in partnership with 5YP, again working remotely, with all on site research and partnerships and material decisions primarily made by Tana Bana Trust in coordination with 5YP. The edition of 170 is bound and completed on site by Tana Bana Trust as of spring 2024.

kdollykhan@gmail.com jitendrakumar1215@gmail.com

**Aaron Sinift** is an artist living and working in Beacon NY with his child and cat. 5 Year Plan (5YP) began in 2009 as a DIY experiment in Gandhian economics in



collaboration with Gandhi Ashrams in India. 5YP is an international artist action inspired by Fluxus, Gandhian philosophy, a desire to re-introduce risk into artist practice, and to re-imagine artworld commodity culture as a means of *seva* (service). “Dreaming It Forward” is the third and final volume of a series begun with “5 Year Plan” (2010), then the “Jholawalla Project” (2013), and “Other Imaginings” (2017).

5YP artist books are in 50+ institutional and private collections including the Metropolitan Museum of New York, MoMA, and The Boston Athenaeum.

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aasinift@hotmail.com

### **Vijay Kumar Handa**

Born October 2<sup>nd</sup> (Gandhi’s birthday) 1942,  
Shekhupura in undivided India, now Pakistan.

Education: Finished law graduation and went for law practice but it did not impress me so I left it. Began service to humanity (*sarvodaya*) in 1974, and since 1977 with wife Bina Handa at Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha

(1 Jawahallal Nehru Marg, New Delhi 2) teaching spinning and expanding Gandhian thought by working with students throughout New Delhi.

**Mrs. Bina Handa**

Born August 16 1947 immediately after Independence Day (15/8/47) and born into Independent India. She has a BA from Kamal Nehru College/Delhi University, and MA in Hindi from Agra University. She began service to humanity in 1969 on the inspiration of Baba Lal Singh who trained her for spreading spinning. In 1973 when Khaka Sahib Kalilkar, the founder of Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha showed his wish to start spinning in his institution she joined Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha for spreading spinning and Gandhian thought. Since then she has worked there with her husband, teaching charkha throughout New Delhi.

**Uday Pratap Paul** is an artist living and working in Varanasi, U.P. He has a BFA from Banares Hindu University, and is a master sculptor in the workshop of B.C.Paul, and exhibits frequently in India. He served as documentary filmmaker and photographer for Dreaming It Forward among many other crucial services. Uday contributed five artworks to this edition. @udaypratappaul / udaypratappaul@gmail.com

**Snehashis Ganguly** is the Director of the Chinmoyee Kala Niketan, a non-profit (NGO) established in 1997 for multi-disciplinary artistic skill development in Varanasi U.P. which printed the edition Dreaming It Forward. Snehashis is an alumni of Shatiniketan. For this book, 180+ woodblocks were hand cut by: Ram Prakash Vishwakarma age 64, Chauharja Prasad 63, Shivpal Singh 51, and Brijpal Singh 62; The 39+ artworks were printed by: Snehashis Ganguly, Kanhaiya Pal, Iqbal, Kamar, and Satish.

**Keris Salmon & Frank Williams** nurtured our project from the very beginning when it was just a notion, and their support enabled our research across India, following recommendations in search of the last remaining home-spinning seva (service) ashrams in India. Our conversations and their questions helped to shape and broaden the scope of our work, and their willingness to take risks helped create the conditions for this collective vision of artwork to become a reality.

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## PROJECTS BY 5 YEAR PLAN

5 YEAR PLAN (2010)

Google NYC Jholas (2011 & 2012)

Jholawalla Project (2013)

OTHER IMAGININGS (2013-2016)  
with Tana Bana Trust

Dreaming it Forward  
with Tana Bana Trust  
(2024)

For more information visit: [5yearplan.org](http://5yearplan.org)

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back cover photo by Uday Pratap Paul:  
Sirsam family (left-r) Rushikesh (son), Kalpana (mother),  
Moreshwar (father), Ambika (or Antika, one of twin  
daughters) in front of their home in Umri.

कच्चे काम के लिए जगह / SPACE FOR ROUGH WORK



