CHAPTER – V

NON-COOPERATION AND KHILAFAT CAMPAIGNS
(1920-22) AND WOMEN’S MOBILIZATION

Gandhi’s return to India around 1915 after his long-drawn struggle for the cause of the Indians settled in South Africa, received a warm and big welcome from the Indian masses. His arrival in India was a turning point in the India’s struggle for freedom. He was venerated as a messiah, a harbinger of peace, and huge masses were drawn towards his charismatic personality from various sections of society irrespective of caste, creed and social status. The achievements registered by him in South Africa were well known to the Indian people. His simplicity, humility, simple dialect and down to earth style made his identification easier and spontaneous. Little wonder that when Gandhi made his Non-cooperation programme known to the masses, the response was overwhelming, with men and women from different sections of society extending their whole-hearted support.

Though Gandhi had arrived in India from South Africa in 1915, the first political struggle was launched by him in 1919. After the end of World War I, when there were renewed demands for self-rule, the Government passed the repressive Rowlatt Bills “at the beginning of 1919 prohibiting public protest and suspending civil liberties. This was when Gandhi began to develop a programme for women”1 Gandhi formed a Satyagraha Sabha and announced that a hartal (closure of shops, offices and all public activity) would take place on 6th April. On this day, he addressed a gathering of women (representing different classes and communities) and impressed upon them the need to take part in the Satyagraha (peaceful resistance) movement.

On 13th April 1919, at the orders of General Dyer hundreds of peaceful protestors were massacred at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. “Men, women, and children were
killed in this brutal massacre, unmasking forever Britain’s civilizing mission”. 2 The Hunter Enquiry Committee Report informed that as many as four hundred people were shot dead and twelve hundred people were injured. This was not the end of it. There were various incidents where sufferings were inflicted upon women and their modesty was outraged. According to a statement made by twenty-three women:

We were called from our houses wherever we were and collected near the School. We were asked to remove our veils. We were abused and harassed to give out the name of Bhai Mool Singh as having lectured against the Government. This incident occurred at the end of Baisakhi last in the morning in Mr. Besworth Smith’s presence. He spat at us and spoke many bad things. He beat some of us with sticks. We were made to stand in rows and to hold our ears. He abused us also saying: ‘Flies what can you do, if I shoot you? 3

In retaliation, there was an outbreak of violence in different parts of the country in the form of arson, looting and even assaults on Englishmen at the physical level. Gandhi felt greatly pained at these incidents, and on 18 April, 1919 he called off his Satyagraha campaign. He candidly admitted that his decision to launch the Satyagraha campaign was a “Himalayan miscalculation” because the masses were not prepared for this. 4 Though the campaign was called off, but it was very much clear that women had begun to actively associate themselves in the ongoing struggle for India’s independence.

II

Another important incident to have taken place around that time was the Khilafat question which had enormously agitated the Muslims of India. This issue was related to the Turkish Empire and the treatment meted out to the Khalifa who is held in high esteem by the Muslims by virtue of his being the temporal head of the Muslims all over the world. “The Khalifa, ‘successor to the Prophet Muhammad. commander of the faithful, the shadow of God on earth’—these exalted titles convey the symbolic importance of the Khalif to the community of Islam.”5
During the period of war, the Prime Minister of England had given an assurance to the Muslims that no harm would be caused to the Turkish Empire. A deputation of the Muslim Khilafat Conference also paid a visit to England with the purpose of putting forward their point of view in regard to Turkey and the Khilafat. The British government, however, turned down the requests of the Muslims. On 14 May 1920, a draft treaty called the Treaty of Sevres was published, setting aside all the assurances given to the Muslims by the British during the war period. This greatly annoyed the Muslims, and the Khilafat movement started assuming serious proportions during the 1919-20 winter. Gandhi saw this as a good opportunity for uniting the Hindus and the Muslims and for bringing the masses into the national mainstream. To quote Gandhi:

I discovered the weapon of non-cooperation in the form we know while thinking about the Khilafat. I feel very much about this issue because I am a staunch Hindu. If I wish to see my religion protected against seven crores of Muslims, I must be ready even to die for the protection of their religion. Similarly, for the Hindus as well remain a meaningless ideal until Hindus and Muslims develop unity of heart; till such time, cow-protection will remain an impossibility. I do not believe that the Muslims will betray us once their end has been achieved. Those who believe in religion do not betray anyone. I do not know of a single instance in history of a great sacrifice by the Hindus having gone unrewarded. What was done before now was a kind of bargaining. There is no place whatever for bargaining in our dealings today. The Hindus should help the Muslims as a matter of duty and look to God for reward. They must not ask anything of the Muslims. I seldom mention the subject of cow-protection to the Ali Brothers. I have already published the conversation with Maulana Abdul Bari. He knows, all the same, that I have not concealed any hope of being able to melt the hearts of Muslims, by dying for them, if need be. It is my conviction that God always regards a good. My prayer is to God. I have sold myself to the Muslims without demanding a price and I ask each and every Hindu to do the same. This is no policy, but plain dealing. I would not have been ready to die for Muslims if their case had been weak. If knowing their case to be obviously just. I
remained aloof through doubt or fear, my Hinduism would be disgraced and I would have failed in my duty as a neighbour.

I know that the Khilafat agitation is not a political weapon. It is the duty of all Muslims to defend the Khilafat. It is a different matter that Hindus may not regard it as their duty as well. The Muslims will not accept cow-protection as a religious duty. But all Muslims know that for the Hindus it is so. In the same way, all Hindus must know that to defend the Khilafat is a religious duty for the Muslims. I have great respect for the devotion of the Ali Brothers to their religion. They would not have become fakirs just for the sake of political benefits. Of course, fighting for the Khilafat will increase the power of Islam. It is no crime to rejoice at this. The Muslims cannot but be glad; and, if we wish that people of other faiths should be happy at the awakening of a new spirit in Hinduism and its regeneration, we Hindus should also be glad at the regeneration at Islam.

He sternly warned the government that if justice was denied to the Muslims, he would be left with no other option but to resume Satyagraha.

Thus in September 1920, the Non-cooperation resolution was put forward before the Congress section at Calcutta. It was ratified at Nagpur in December 1920. In the first Non-cooperation agitation itself the participation of women became very much evident. In different parts of the country, women joined the processions, propagated the use khadi and charkha and some of them even took the extreme step of leaving government schools and colleges. Urging the Hindu and Muslim women to adopt Swadeshi goods and to start using the spinning-wheel, Gandhi wrote:

It is plain that the Khilaft agitation will benefit the cause of swadeshi. But the resolve not to use articles made in Europe only so long as the Khilafat issue remained unsolved does not seem to me proper. Muslims ought not to use European goods even if they get full justice on the Khilafat question. It is, moreover, not enough to boycott European goods alone. No foreign goods, including Japanese goods, should
be used. The swadeshi movement is intended as a permanent change. No matter how justly Europe deals with us, it is our duty to use only swadeshi goods so that India may ever get perfect justice. The country, thus can prosper only through the spinning-wheel and the handloom. Lakhs of Muslims have given up spinning and lakhs of Muslim weavers have given up weaving. If Hindu and Muslim women again take to spinning and Hindu and Muslim weavers to weaving, within a short time the country will be able to produce all the cloth it needs. I wish, therefore, to draw the attention of all. 8

Women constituted a powerful group within the Khilafat movement. They extended their support to the movement both morally and financially by giving their ornaments in charity. A letter by Sir Harcourt Butler to Lord Hardinge aptly highlights the important role played by women in the movement. He writes: “The priests and women are the most important influences in India... and I am not very much afraid of the politicians until they play on these two”.9

A woman who played an active role during the Non-cooperation movement was the indefatigable Ali matriarch Bi Amman. She was the mother of the respected Ali Brothers and commanded great respect in political circles. She was vehemently against the idea of women remaining confined to their homes and not associating themselves with the political activities. She had earlier been associated with women through meetings to support the work of the Anjuman-e-Khuddem-e-Ka’aba, the purpose of which was “to collect funds to maintain the house of the Ka’aba and other Muslim holy places, and to defend them against non-Muslim aggression, purposes which they emphasized were “strictly religious, having nothing to do with politics”.10

She then appeared on the national scene in 1917, at the age of sixty-seven. during the agitation to secure the release of Annie Besant and her own sons from their wartime internment. Annie Besant was released and elected President of the National Congress that year. Muhammad Ali was chosen to preside over the Muslim League in anticipation of his release which, however, did not occur. At the annual meeting.
of the League, Muhammed Ali’s photograph occupied the presidential chair and Bi Amman spoke briefly on his behalf from behind the veil of her white burqua.11

Perhaps, for the first time a Muslim woman addressed a political gathering in which both Hindus and Muslims were present. At the Congress session also she occupied a seat next to Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu. This incident was extremely significant because it symbolized the growing participation of Indian women in the political field.

The Central Khilafat Committee started a women’s branch in 1921 which organized women’s meetings throughout the country during the Khilafat and Tilak Swaraj Fund raising campaigns. These meetings were addressed by Bi Amman, Begum Muhammad Ali and Begum Hazrat Mohani among others. They often joined forces with the Hindu women, the prominent among them being Sarojini Naidu, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Basanti Devi, wife of C.R. Das of Calcutta. They addressed the meetings held exclusively for women during the course of which

... they exhorted women to do their duty to God and their country by urging their men to support non-cooperation and by imbibing their children with religious faith and patriotism. They also called for contributions to the cause. Women responded with small gifts of cash and larger gifts of gold, bangles, anklets, and ear rings for the Khilafat and Tilak Swaraj Funds.12

At a meeting held in Delhi in May 1920, Aktar Begum, an eminent local Shia woman, made a fervent appeal to the Muslim women to defend their religion by extending support to the Non-cooperation campaign. To quote her:

Are we not masters (Sir) in our homes? If we are, we can compel the men to observe the non-cooperation resolutions religiously. We should remain firm in our faith, ostracize all defaulters, and keep our men strictly in line. Our religion and resolve are on trial. If you wish to stand well in the eyes of God and the
Prophet, and enter paradise in the retinue of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, do not neglect your religious views.13

Thus, support of the Khilafat cause and Non-cooperation were looked upon as religious duties.

Bi Amman continued to tour different parts of the country in support of the Khilafat cause even after the imprisonment of her sons again in late 1921. At a ladies’ conference in Bombay which was attended by six thousand people, a resolution was passed urging women to excel as numbers. As President of the All India Ladies’ Conference at the Ahmedabad Congress in December 1921, she appealed to the people to unite, for, “without cooperation among the different communities we can’t liberate our country or live peaceful and honourable lives”.14 She also spoke about the way the British “had chained India in the twin fetters of slavery and eternal domination. The people had to choose whether to wear their chains or to work for their national and religious freedom”.15

At a mass meeting in Punjab, she lifted the veil of her burqa while addressing a huge gathering and sought to justify this action of hers by saying that all the people present there were just like her sons and daughters. There was therefore no reason to follow the purdah custom in their presence. She further said that Swaraj was sure to come if women had “a heart to make sacrifices for the cause”.16

In February 1922, she visited Patna and Bhagalpur. At Bhagalpur, she was not given permission to see the political prisoners and as a mark of protest the prisoners and their relatives refused to see each other.17 She managed to raise funds to the tune of Rs.60,000/- from Darbhanga (Bihar) for the Khilafat Committee; and at Mongyr she was presented with a purse of Rs.20,000/-18 The Delhi branch of women’s Khilafat Committee headed by Begum Ajmal Khan and Begum Ansari collected a sum of over Rs.20,000/-19 during Bi Amman’s visit to Delhi. It may thus be seen that these women leaders played a big role in raising funds and in aiding the Swadeshi effort. They
recognized the strength that women’s traditional role in the family gave them and built upon that foundation. According to Gail Minault:

Indian woman for all her subordination to the male in society is queer in her own reality. She is the arbiter of words and instructor in basic religious observances and cultural attitudes. She is also viewed as vulnerable, needing to be protected and this too gives her a way of calling her men to duty to defend her honour and their own.20

The Government did consider the idea of prosecuting Bi Amman for making objectionable speeches, but thought it prudent not to arrest her.21 Mahatma Gandhi also had high regards for Bi Amman which is evident from the special message he sent to her at the time of his arrest in March 1922. He said: “Tell Bai Amman to pray for me and for all of us and to carry on the work which we have left behind. Her prayers and work will be quite sufficient to ensure our quick release and success”.22

Thus from a stage when Bi Amman addressed basically religious meetings which were exclusively for women, she graduated to become a highly respected and popular mother figure of great eminence who had become confident enough to address gatherings unveiled before huge masses. A popular poem of the time which reminds us of the achievements of Ali Brothers and their mother is quoted below:

Thus spoke the mother of Muhammad Ali, Son, give sons life for the Khilafat. And when with son, too, Shaukat Ali, son give your life for the Khilafat. Don’t give your old mother cause for grief, but confessing your faith, give up your life. Give your all in this home of trial, son, give your life for the Khilafat. Even had I had seven sons, God sacrifice them all for the Khilafat. This is the way of the faith of the Prophet, Son, give your life for the Khilafat.23

Bi Amman continued to play an active role in the political field right till her demise in 1924. Gandhi paid a glowing tribute to her in the following words: “She
realised that the freedom of India was impossible without Hindu-Muslim unity and Khaddar. She, therefore, ardently preached unity which had become an article of faith with her. She had discarded all her foreign or mill made clothing and taken to Khaddar ....24

III

Gandhi had always believed in following a policy of moderation and restraint which became glaringly evident from his advice to the agitated delegates who had assembled in Amritsar: “I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours”.26 However, two incidents which took place in May 1920 convinced Gandhi about the nefarious designs of the British. The first one was the publication of the text of the Treaty of Sevres on 15 May by the British Government “which verily signalled the complete dismemberment of the Turkish Empire”.27 The second one was the release of the findings of the Hunter Committee on 28 May which was appointed to examine the tragic incident connected with the Rowlatt Satyagraha. From the Report it became clear that the British had no intention of making amends for the violence unleashed by them in Amritsar. On the contrary, the British had every intention of ignoring the criminal acts of its officials.28 Realization then dawned upon Gandhi that every Indian was bound to participate in the Non-cooperation movement.

Gandhi felt justified in making a fervent plea to the Indian masses to adopt the path of Satyagraha with the ultimate purpose of removing a regime that showed scant regard to the basic principle of civilized governance. Writing in Young India, he made his views about the Non-cooperation movement very clear:

... We must voluntarily put up with the losses and inconveniences that arise from having to withdraw our support from a Government that is ruling against our will. Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust Government, poverty in
that case is a virtue, says Thoreau. It may be that in the transition stage we may make mistakes, there may be avoidable suffering. These things are preferable to national emasculation.

We must refuse to wait for the wrong to be righted till the wrong-doer has been roused to a sense of inequality. We must not, for fear of ourselves or others having to suffer, remain participators in it. But we must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrong-doer directly or indirectly.29

Thus, on 23 July 1920 Gandhi made an announcement that the Non-cooperation movement would be inaugurated on 1 August 1920 which would be a day of fasting and prayer and the suspension of any kind of business. Tilak was firmly committed into extending his whole-hearted support to the movement. But, unfortunately, he left for his heavenly abode before the dawn of 1 August. Gandhi, who was one of the pall bearers along with the Ali Brothers, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and many others, expressed his grief in the obituary note in the following words:

My strongest bulwark is gone.... A giant among men has fallen. The roar of the lion is hushed... For us he will go down to the generations yet unborn as a maker of modern India. They will revere his memory as a man who lived for them and died for them ... Let us erect for the only Lokamanya of India an imperishable movement by weaving into our own lives his bravery, his simplicity, wonderful industry and his love of his country.30

At the special session of the Indian National Congress held on 4 September in Calcutta, the Congress decided to extend its full support to Gandhi’s Non-cooperation campaign – a decision that was ratified at the annual session of the Congress held in December in Nagpur.31 The stage was thus set for the first great struggle to be carried out in a purely non-violent manner against one of the mightiest imperial powers known to the history of mankind.
Barely a month and a half after the special session of Congress which was held on 4 September 1920, Gandhi, while addressing a women’s meeting at Dakor, made the following observation:

This Government has taught us false ways. We have come to believe that foreign cloth adds to one’s beauty. Even the clothes worn by you, in this gathering, have the odour of foreign cloth. Even mill cloth is not swadeshi. The cloth produced by the mills is not sufficient to meet the needs of the country. You are not quite so poor. I have seen people who are poorer than you. I have seen men who have only a loin-cloth with which to clothe themselves and women who have not more than a torn skirt. We can set ourselves free this very day if India adopts swadeshi, if all women take to the good old spinning-wheel and if they put on clothes made only with yarn spun by themselves. To the women of the past, virtue was beauty. Wearing of foreign cloth makes a woman ugly. There is a touch of the harlot in a woman seeking loveliness by fine dressing. What is our image of Sita and Damayanti, whom we adore? Is it that of women clad in finery? We revere Damayanti who wandered in the forest, half-clad, and Sita who suffered vanavasa for fourteen years. Was those days, people covered themselves with nothing more than leaves. To seek beauty by adorning oneself is to imitate the harlot. If you want to follow your dharma, you must first understand the swadeshi dharma. It consists in using cloth made with yarn spun by yourselves and woven by your menfolk, singing as they work. I am truly handsome, since the clothes I am wearing are made with yarn spun by women and lovingly woven by men. If you wish to deliver yourselves from Ravanarajya and establish Ramarajya, you must adopt swadeshi and introduce the spinning-wheel in your homes. There are many women now who will be able to teach you how to work it. Each one of you should spin for at least an hour daily, singing devotional songs all the while. Get the yarn, afterwards, woven into cloth.

You will no doubt find it difficult at first to use hand-spun cloth in place of foreign muslin. Some women in Bombay complained to me that their saris,
which previously weighed less than forty tolas now exceeded seventy tolas in weight. I replied to them in figurative language, saying that, they had till now lowered their own weight by reducing the weight of their clothes. During pregnancy, women cheerfully carry their load for nine months and suffer the severe pains of child-birth with joy. This is the time for the birth of new India. Will you not be ready at least to carry the weight of heavy clothes at this hour? You can make India free only if you bear this burden. If you wish to give birth to a new India, every woman must bear this burden not merely for nine months but for nine years.

If you wish to be pure like Sita, if you would give up the many forms of subtle mental degradation of the kind I have described and make others give them up, if you wish to understand your true dharma rather than wickedness, then you must whole-heartedly join in the movement for swaraj. Each one of us must be able to distinguish between true dharma and wickedness. Many fraudulent men will also come to you for contributions. I would ask you not to contribute to any of them. I hold out my hand to you only because I feel certain that you have trust in me. I shudder to introduce the corrupting influence of money in my work. Had I the strength and the tapascharya to be able to carry on my work without money, I would most certainly not ask for it. But I do not have such tapascharya and such strength. I also am a man of Kaliyuga and am full of failings, but I know that I am constantly striving to overcome these failings. So, if you trust me, contribute anything you wish to, from a pice onwards. The funds will be handled by the Swarajya Sabha.

Finally, I request you to see that these few things I have placed before you do not go in at one ear and come out at the other. By adopting swadeshi, you will be able to save some money on clothes. You will be able to give your children milk and ghee out of this. At present, you spend on your children. I, too, want a small share from the amount you will save. But contribute only if you wish to. Even if you do not give money, you should at any rate follow the dharma of spinning which I have explained to you. We have today to wash off the pollution
caused by the eclipse. The right way of doing so is to purify our hearts. If all of you take the name of Rama in good faith and pray for Ramarajya in place of Ravanarajya, I can assure you that you will find that Ram is the strength of the weak. May your hearts be ruled by God and may He set you free from all other forms of enslavement.32

Gandhi felt greatly satisfied that he had begun his Non-cooperation movement with women. The response which he got was indeed overwhelming. To quote him:

I started begging for money at Dakor and, fortunately, I made a beginning with women. Among them, the sister who first gave me a piece of jewellery made a living by grinding flour for others. When she took off her ear-ring and handed it over to me, that same moment I was convinced that India's women had understood the holy nature of peaceful non-co-operation. The experiences which followed were marvellous indeed. Girls in Ahmedabad parted with their bangles, rings and chains. In Poona, they literally showered jewellery on me. There were similar scenes in Belgaum, Dharwar and Hubli. Muslim women in Delhi, from behind their purdah, gave jewellery, currency notes and cash.

When the women in the country have woken up, who can hinder swaraj? Dharma has always been preserved through women. Nations have won their independence because women had brave men for sons. By preserving purity of character, they have kept dharma alive. There have been women who sacrificed their all and saved the people. When women, who have done all this, have become alive to the suffering of the country, how long can that suffering last?

The women among whom I see this awakening cannot be described as educated, but they have understanding. They fully understand the obligations of dharma. What the educated classes take a long time to see, the women, with their
gift of intuition, have understood at a mere hint. They have not taken long to realize that swaraj means Ramarajya.

Everything has been put clearly before them. The nature of the [country’s] suffering has been explained. They have also been told that the remedy for this suffering is non-co-operation, and also what non-co-operation means. They have realized their duty in helping to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity, while everyone understands and remains faithful to her own religion.

If women keep up what they have so wisely begun, I am sure we can provide education for the whole country with the help of the jewellery which they can spare. The women who have offered their ornaments have done so on the understanding that they will not ask them to be replaced before we have got swaraj, but will do without them. Thus, with a little sacrifice of jewellery on wome’s part, we can arrange for the country’s education and promote swadeshi. I hope, therefore, that they will continue the great yajna which commenced at Dakor and that the husbands or other relatives will not restrain any of them in this sacred effort.33

Thus, Gandhi was of the firm conviction that women had an important role to play in the national movement for the country’s independence, and that they should consider it a religious duty to wear only khadi clothes. To quote him:

Mahatmaji appealed to the ladies not to neglect to do their part in the country’s struggle for freedom. He urged them to exhort and encourage their husbands and sons to pursue the path of duty, and urged them to help vigorously and effectively in the building up of a free India by taking up swadeshi. In the days of Ravana’s government even Sita Devi had to wear for fourteen years the rough garment made from the bark of the tree. Even so, today, when the adoption of swadeshi meant a long step in the path of freedom for India, the Indian ladies should make it a matter of religious duty with them not only to wear only khaddar clothes both
hand-spun and hand-woven, they must also devote one hour at least daily to hand-spinning and help in the hand-weaving of cloths. The women of India owed it as a duty of their country to discard fineries in clothes and to be simple in their dress.

In swadeshi there is an effective way to swaraj and redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs and vindication of the national honour. The main burden of the task of propagating swadeshi lay on the women of India and they must rise to the occasion.34

The women who had heard Gandhi’s speech were so moved by his passionate pleas and the faith he reposed in India’s women power that they felt the least hesitant in giving their jewellery for the noble cause, and were greatly motivated to take the swadeshi vow.

The first Non-cooperation movement was a big success with women in different parts of the country joining the processions and propagating the use of khadi and charkha. Renuka Ray informs that she was so deeply inspired by the speeches made by Gandhi in Calcutta in 1920 that she, along with her other fellow students of the Diocesan College, offered their jewellery to Gandhi. “Many of these girls, including herself gave up their studies and joined the non-cooperation movement”.35

Vijaylakshmi Pandit too came under the spell of Gandhi when he visited Allahabad and stayed at the historic Anand Bhawan.

I sat on the ground with my cousin and the little figure began to speak. He was quite incongruous.... He spoke very bad Hindi and yet the interesting thing was that none of these things seemed to matter after the first few minutes. He was saying something which was gripping everybody. He was compelling people to look at him, to listen to him .... And he ended by appealing to women to give him something”.36
In response to Gandhi’s appeal, Mrs. Pandit donated her gold bangles, though she regretted that she did not give away more.37

In view of the consideration that the Amritsar tragedy was one of the main reasons behind the launching of the Non-cooperation campaign by Gandhi, it would be appropriate to consider the role played by women in this movement in the land of five rivers --Panjab. Though the women’s participation was rather restricted, yet they had started taking part in the nationalist processions and in public meetings. Manmohini Sehgal has fond memories of a public meeting in Lahore during the period under reference. She says:

While the meeting was in progress, the police came and requested the women to leave the place so that they could lathi-charge the men. But the women refused to leave and later on the meeting dispersed, and men and women took out a procession.... It was the first time when women in Lahore participated in a political procession, raised slogans and walked in the streets together with men.38

Sarala Devi Chaudhurani had played a significant role in making the charkha and khadi popular among the women of Punjab. During 1919-22, Sarala Devi was so strongly influenced by the Gandhian ideology of Non-cooperation that she donated most of her jewellery for the nationalist cause. She even went to the extent of returning the prestigious Padmavati Gold Medal which had been awarded to her by the Calcutta University. She was first woman to have been awarded with the Medal.39 By learning to spin the charkha and by wearing a purely khadi dress, she became a Gandhian to the core. In a letter addressed to Gandhi she wrote that the khadi sarees worn by her greatly impressed her audiences, so much so that her songs and speeches did not draw much attention.40 To make the Non-cooperation movement more popular, she organized and addressed several meetings in the Punjab region during the course of which she tried to inculcate among the Punjabi women the Swadeshi fervour and nationalist feelings. Though she was based in Lahore, Sarala Devi travelled extensively in various parts of northern India in order to popularize the concepts of charkha and khadi. She was the
spokeswoman of Gandhi in the true sense who felt that India’s poverty could be countered only through Swadeshi:

The hand that spun in India supplied the nation with food and comfort... The revival and protection of a dead art, the remodelling of Indian homes, the reclothing of India by India’s own hands-this is the Alpha and Omega of Swaraj.41

Apart from Sarala Devi, other women who made significant contributions in mobilizing women in the Punjab region were Radha Devi, Parvati Devi and Lado Rani Zutshi.42

Thus in most of the women’s meetings in Punjab the emphasis was on the propagation of Gandhi’s view that poverty in India was due to the abandonment of Swadeshi by the people. Gandhi had repeatedly asserted that:

We should use only such cloth as is produced here ... Our mothers should take the spinning-wheel into their homes. We should get cloth woven by our weavers and wear only that. I tell all my brothers and sisters of India: Swadeshi is your duty. Wear khaddar: Non-cooperation consists in doing all this. Do not draw the sword. Sheathe it. The sword will only cut our own throats.43

In Lahore the concept of Swadeshi was sought to be made popular through the motto “shama se shama jalti hai” which meant that those who had already accepted and imbibed the concepts of charkha and khadi, should try to convince at least ten other people into accepting the Gandhian ideology of Swadeshi and wearing khadi clothes.44 Thus the efforts made by Sarala Devi and other women of eminence in Punjab went a long way in binding the Punjabi women together at the emotional level. This can be gauged from the fact that “when Gandhi visited Jullundur in early 1921, the welcome address presented to him was printed on a piece of khadi supplied by the aged mother of a prominent lawyer of the city, Nazimuddin Shah”.45
It is significant to note that the popularizing of the Swadeshi concepts did not remain confined to big cities only. In fact, its influence was felt in the smaller towns also. For example, in Karnal an exhibition to popularize khadi was organized and prizes were awarded to those khadi manufacturers who had done something substantial to make khadi popular. Also, as many as 3,000 women wearing khadi dresses “walked through the streets of Multan alongwith a cart full of khadi which they sold during the course of their unique march”.46 Above all, in auspicious occasions like marriages, people could be seen attending the functions attired in khadi. Expressing great satisfaction at the success of the Non-cooperation campaign among the women in Punjab, Gandhi made the following observation:

It is my deep conviction that the women of the Punjab have understood my message. They have felt that Swadeshi is not merely a means of protecting India’s wealth but... that in it lies the country’s best freedom... I beg to state, deliberately and knowingly, that I do not believe the profound feelings of the Punjabi women to be directed towards me personally. They are taken up with admiration for me because of the truth that they see in me and the simplicity of Swadeshi which they have come to realize through me.47

Women began to participate in the Congress sessions in increasing numbers. At the annual session of the Congress held in Ahmedabad in December 1921, as many as seventeen women delegates represented Punjab, “which was the highest number for any province in the subcontinent”.48

Gujarat was another region where the Non-cooperation campaign of Gandhi became immensely popular among women. Perhaps one important reason for this was that Gandhi himself hailed from Gujarat. Besides, many of his close women associates who were affiliated to his Ashram contributed a great deal in making the Non-cooperation movement popular in several towns, cities and villages of Gujarat.49 Among the women of Gujarat who came into close contact with Gandhi during the early phases of the movement, the name of Anasuya Sarabhai stands out prominently.50 She was the
sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, a leading mill-owner of Ahmedabad. She had been rendering social service since 1914 through providing education both to the children of the workers and to the workers themselves.

It was only natural that gradually a close association developed between Anasuya and Gandhi and it was mainly through their combined efforts that the Ahmedabad textile workers strike in February-March 1918 (involving 16,000 weavers) was a big success. Later, Anasuya participated energetically during the Kheda Satyagraha and was also one of the first signatories of the ‘Satyagraha pledge’ evolved by Gandhi to oppose the Rowlatt Bills.51

During the course of the Non-cooperation movement, Gandhi toured many villages of Gujarat along with Kasturba, Anasuyabhen and some other “Ashramite sisters”, and impressed upon women the need to spin the charkha, wear khadi, boycott government educational institutions, remove untouchability and promote Hindu-Muslim unity. This motivated women to take part in the constructive programmes. Under Gandhi’s inspiration several girl students left Government schools and colleges. prominent among them were Manibhen Patel and Miss Desai whose efforts were hailed by Gandhi in public.52 In many of the women’s meetings in Gujarat, women showed their generosity by donating jewellery and cash for the noble cause. Gandhi was so moved by such generous acts that after a meeting in Ahmedabad, he made the following statement:

This amount is more sacred than donations worth lakhs of rupees from millionaires. There is an aroma of the very soul of the women of Ahmedabad in every brass piece given here. Every coin is steeped with their devotion for the country... It is on the basis of such sacred small coins that I will erect the edifice of Swaraj.53

Gandhi was ultimately convinced that in the programme of work for swaraj, the contributions made by women were no less than those of men. He said, “I have
marvelled at the awakening among the women of Gujarat. They have great power in their hands. In the programme of work for swaraj, the women’s share is as great as, in fact greater than, the men’s. I pray to God that the women of Gujarat may play their part to the full and win glory for themselves and for the name of Gujarat and of India.”

It is important to note that the Congress session which was held in Ahmedabad in December 1921 was marked by a big historical event. For the first time in the history of the Congress, women performed their roles as volunteers. Under the leadership of Nandubehn Kanuga, a total of 131 women volunteers were present on the occasion.

In the metropolitan city of Bombay also, women extended their whole-hearted support to the Non-cooperation campaign. They imparted strength to the movement through a large number of meetings, emphasis on the importance of spinning, organization of khadi melas and, above all, through taking part in public programmes and demonstrations. Among the various women who played a key role in Bombay, the name of Avantikabai Gokhale deserves a special mention. She played a leading part in the Chaparan Satyagraha in 1917. Credit goes to her for writing the first biography of Mahatma Gandhi in 1918. She remained an active political worker during the period 1920-1946 and was imprisoned many times. She also worked for the uplift of Harijans and welfare of women, and started the Hind Mahila Sangh with the purpose of bringing about nationalist awareness among women.

Other eminent women who made efforts to popularize the constructive programme of Swadeshi in Bombay were Perin and Goshibehn Captain, the Petit women Jaji Jehangir and Mithubehn, the Faizi sisters, women from the Tyabji family, Manekabai Bahadurji and, above all, Sarojini Naidu. These eminent women were closely associated with some of the established women’s organizations of Bombay of those times like Bhagini Samaj, the Gujarati Hindu Stree Mandal and Hind Mahila Samaj. And by virtue of their close association with these organizations, these women were greatly facilitated in spreading Gandhi’s Non-cooperation campaign. Some other women’s organizations which came into being in 1921 in Bombay are: Shri Sarada Samaj of Dadar, Ladies Khilafat, Committee, and Rashtriya Stree Sabha.
played the most prominent role because of its close association with the Congress. Also, a National Girls’ school was established in 1921.64 During the Satyagraha Week which was organized by the Congress during 6-13 April 1921 in Bombay, Sarojini Naidu played a big role by addressing a number of meetings with the object of associating women in large numbers with the constructive programme of Swadeshi. Significantly, on the last day of the Week – 13 April – which happened to be the Jallianwala Bagh day, as many as 500 women were present to hear the speech of Sarojini Naidu.

There is no denying that the support extended by women in large numbers to the constructive programmes did make the Gandhian movement popular, but it would be fair to say that the household activities (like spinning, wearing khadi, etc.) “were not the only means of popularizing the nationalist movement”. Two public events in which women of the extended female space participated had a great impact on public consciousness: A procession to oppose the visit of Prince of Wales to Bombay in November 1921 featured the participation of up to one thousand women. The procession received extensive publicity and was described as ‘unique’.

The press also gave wide coverage to the participation of women in the public burning of foreign cloth in the mill areas at night. These events helped further to underwrite the legitimacy of the nationalist struggle. While the men of various factions argued among themselves, the women remained aloof from such politicking and worked for an idealized notion of swaraj and national unity.65

In the southern part of India, the East Godavari region of Andhra Pradesh deserves a special mention. Gandhi’s visit to this reason in connection with the All India Congress meeting at Vijayawada in 1921 was an important occasion in the political history of the district. His speeches in Andhra proved to be a big source of inspiration for women to participate in the struggle for freedom. In a speech delivered to women at Rajahmundry on 3 April 1921, Gandhi said:
You, my dear sisters, I want to warn you and to bring you to a sense of duty and religion. If there is a dancing girl amidst you, I ask you to make her life not one of shame. Take up the spinning-wheel and take the few pies that the work brings you, and it will bring pies and God into your house. Do you suppose that Rama and Sita would rest for a single moment if they knew a single woman might have to sell her honour for lust of men and for a mess of pottage? I ask you to discard all your fine garments and ornaments, if only for the protection of these dancing girls. Take up the spinning-wheel for their sake, if not for the sake of India. Take up the spinning-wheel for the sake of the purity of India. Take up the sari that the charkha can give you. Let the spotless sari of India be the protection of the virtue of man and woman in India. I ask you to consider that to wear fine foreign saries is a sin.66

A prominent example is that of Subbamma who paid a visit to Vijayawada with a group of women to seek the blessings of Gandhi. Under the magnetic influence of Gandhi, she took the plunge notwithstanding the various social constraints prevalent in those times. She happened to be the first woman of the region to participate in the national movement and to be sent behind the bars for the noble cause. She also succeeded in motivating other women of the region to participate in the freedom struggle. Her efforts were hailed by the local newspapers. Sudarsini, a local newspaper, gave the following report: “We congratulate Smt. Subbamma for her patriotism and courage to go to Jail. We (the women) have greater tenacity of purpose than men. We hope that Andhra women will adopt Swadeshi at least now that they have heard of the heroism and conviction of Subbamma”.67 Another local publication made the following observation:

The District Collector of Godawari has acquired distinction in the policy of repression... But what could the poor officers do? They have arrested the men. Yet the movement did not stop. For women have taken the place of men and hoisted the banner of Swaraj...68
However, in 1922, Gandhi called off the Non-cooperation campaign all of a sudden taking all concerned by surprise. But despite the suspension of the movement, “the atmosphere in the Godavari area remained charged, and women like subbamma continued to conduct meetings to popularise khadi and the concept of the abolition of untouchability, the two most important items of Gandhi’s constructive programme”.

Another woman of the Godavari district who was deeply influenced by Gandhi was Durgabai, who started her political career at the tender age of eleven. Gandhi’s visit to the Godavari district brought a radical change in her thinking. Gandhi held a meeting at Rajahmundry on 6 April 1921. As a matter of chance Durgabai happened to be present in that city at that time in connection with the wedding of one of her close relatives. She made the best of her stay in Rajahmundry by attending Gandhi’s meeting. Seeing the volunteers collecting money and other valuables for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, Durgabai too climbed the dias to offer her collection to Gandhi. Holding the little girl’s arms Gandhi asked, “Why don’t you contribute your golden bracelets too”? Durgabai readily parted with her bracelets for such a noble cause.

The patriotic fervour shown by the women of Andhra did not go unnoticed in the fortnightly government reports, as is evident from the following observation:

One feature which was specially noticed in these reports was the active part played by women... in carrying on an active political agitation. Some of them like Duvvuru Subbamma. Ponakka Kanakamma and Unnava Lakshmibayamma excelled the men propogandists in their ability to sway large masses of people.

Thus, to a certain extent, credit for the success of the Non-cooperation movement in Andhra goes to women also. A recent study says that “if the Non-Cooperation Movement made relatively more progress in Andhra than in Madras Presidency, the credit goes partly to women”.
In regard to the women’s participation in Bengal in the Non-cooperation movement of Gandhi, Bharati Ray refers to three distinct features which are as follows:

First, the identification of the freedom struggle with deshpuja and the invocation of shakti continued, making women’s entry into politics smooth.... Second, while Gandhi’s views were not informed by a feminist perspective, they infused self-confidence into women. His assertion that women were morally better suited than men for the non-violent struggle removed the stigma of their inferiority vis-à-vis men.... Third, during the period under survey, Bengal produced political captains of national stature like C.R. Das and Bipin Chandra Pal, and politicized women with leadership abilities, such as Basanti Debi (b. 1880) and Hemaprabha Majumdar (b. 1884). These women leaders had access to the general body of women and helped to promote women’s political and social awareness.73

In Bengal, C.R. Das’ wife Basanti Devi played a key role by giving the lead to women’s demonstrations and picketing shops which sold foreign goods. On 7 December 1921 the police took her into custody for selling khadi in a public street in Calcutta. Urmila Devi and Suniti Devi, her close associates, were also taken into custody. Though the police released them within a few hours, yet this incident greatly agitated the public. To quote Urmila Devi: “We also had set an example to the rest of the women; our arrest had produced the desired effect”.74

Basanti Devi became the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress during 1921-22 and presided over its session in Chittagong in 1922. Thus a Bengali woman, perhaps for the first time, came to occupy a prominent position in the political leadership of the country. She was very much conscious of the fact that unless the women at the grassroot level were involved the national movement would not succeed. Her concern for the grassroot level involvement becomes evident from the presidential speech of hers: “If we have to get back to the simple and best life of India of old days, we have also to revive the dormant villages .... We have to reconstruct our villages, to build up our
village institutions under the conditions of modern life, but according to the genius of our national life”.75

Bihar too did not remain alienated from the Non-cooperation campaign of Gandhi. In 1921, Sarala Devi of Hazaribagh launched the movement. During her Presidential address at the 16th Conference of Students of Hazaribagh in October 1921, she made a fervent appeal to them to boycott government schools and colleges and motivated them to register their strong protest against the Prince of Wales’ visit to India.76

In Patna, it was Savitri Devi who played a significant role in making Gandhi’s movement popular. In the latter part of 1921, she presided over many meetings where she ruthlessly condemned the imperialist designs of the British. “At these meetings participants reiterated their resolve to continue their fight against the British. Women carried the message of non-violence from door to door. They appealed for the boycott of foreign goods, picketed liquor shops and popularized the spinning of khadi in rural and urban areas”.77

At the request of the Oriyan leaders like Gopabandhu Das, Gandhi visited Orissa for the first time on 23 March 1921. To introduce Gandhi to the people of Orissa, a big public meeting was held on the Kathjuri river bed at Cuttack.78 Gopabandhu Das, the father of the Orissa’s freedom movement, introduced Gandhi to the people in the following words:

Comrades! The Mahatma to whom you were all anxious to see is now present before you. He is known to every household and every individual in the country and it is superfluous for me to introduce him to you. Everyone in Orissa knows this great man. Orissa has not made sufficient advance in the political field but she is ahead of every other part of the country in all ages in the field of religion. All the great religious preachers of India have set their foot on the sacred soil of Orissa. Today another great man is here to preach the doctrine of political love.
Orissa has attained glory through aves for religion. The Mahatma’s politics is based on the very same foundation. I know that you are all anxious to follow the footsteps of the Mahatma. Orissa is famous for her catholicity. On the auspicious occasion of Mahatmaji’s visit Orissa. I appeal to you all to imbibe the message of Gandhiji in full recollection of the ancient glories and catholicity of the Oriya people.79

In order to involve women in his programmes, Gandhi thought it better to address women in separate meetings. Thus on the very first day of his visit to Orissa, Gandhi addressed a small gathering of women in the Binod Bihari building premises at Cuttack. Haimavati Devi made all arrangement for the meeting. Professor Mohini Mohan Senapati’s wife sang a patriotic song on this great occasion.80 About 40 women were present in the first meeting, which goes to show that Gandhi had already started making inroads into the psyche of the Oriyan women.81 Significantly, this was for the first time in the history of Orissa that the Oriyan women attended a public meeting. Even more significant was the fact that for the first time a leader of Gandhi’s stature and eminence addressed women in Orissa in a separate meeting.

A small group of Oriya women who addressed that meeting in Purdah went on to become active political leaders of Orissa in the next ten years, being tremendously inspired by the charisma and oratory of Mahatma Gandhi.82

In a speech addressed to a meeting of Utkal Samillani, Madhusudan Das, an eminent freedom fighter of Orissa. said: “We are the foreigners. It must be in our hand. We should use Charkha and we should wear khadi”.83 Madhusudan Das’ speech influenced his niece, Rama Devi, to such an extent that from that day onwards she started spinning the charkha. Gopabandhu Das also made fervent appeals to all sections of Orissa, particularly housewives,84 to devote their leisure hours to spinning.

When the Government of Bihar and Orissa ordered that anybody found guilty of forcing people to boycott foreign clothes would be tried on the charge of criminal
offences. Kuntala Kumari Sabat retaliated by saying that: “Nation is our religion, Charkha is our life. We will hold Charkha in our hand and we will destroy all the conspiracy of the enemy”. Under the inspiration of Gandhi, she started creating a new awareness among women through her sapient pen. She appealed to the Oriya women to boycott the use of “foreign goods and to destroy the administrative machinery of the British authority”.

In 1922, Rama Devi, along with Padmavati Devi and Hiramani Devi, attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Gaya.

This marked a significant breakthrough as they regularly attended the subsequent sessions of the Indian National Congress. Arousal of this political awareness among women during the Non-Cooperation Movement continued and became more manifest during the course of the freedom movement. Though initially the number of women who joined the movement was very small, yet a beginning was made and gradually it swelled. This small band of women leaders had great influence over the general body of women and this went a long way in rousing their political as well as social consciousness since 1922 onwards.

IV

Gandhi also made special efforts to secure the Muslim women’s participation in the Non-cooperation movement. To ensure this, he deftly avoided making references to Hindu mythology and scriptures which he generally employed to draw the Hindu women. When he appeared with Maulana Shaukat Ali to address a Muslim women’s meeting at Patna, he deliberately avoided mentioning Rama, Sita, Ravana, Draupadi, and so on. He urged the Hindu and Muslim women to unite together in a spirit of harmony and to strengthen the movement by taking to charkha and spinning. In order to garner their whole-hearted support, he told the Muslim women that “whatever was written in the holy Koran was all good and there was truth in all religions”. The full text of the speech
delivered by him at a meeting of Muslim women in Bombay on 19 July 1921 is quoted below:

Mahatma Gandhi rose to address the meeting .... He said that he had long connections with Mussulmans and that the gentleman who took him to Africa for the first time was a Muslim friend. He regarded all those present to be his sisters. All their efforts for the attainment of swaraj were meant for safeguarding their religion and there was no distinction whatsoever in his mind between the Hindus and the Muslims.

The Mahatma said that, in his opinion, all religions were good. Sometimes mistakes crept into religion at the instance of some misguided followers. Whatever was written in the holy Koran was all good, and there was truth in all religions. They all stood up for the cause of Islam and they did not want at all a Satanic raj in the world.

In the Satanic raj he could not do any good. He had received a telegram from Aligarh that afternoon intimating him that Mr. Sherwani had been sent to jail notwithstanding the fact that he was working for peace. There might arise an occasion when all good men might be sent to jail and everybody should be ready for that occasion. In Africa, Hindus and Muslims, regardless of sex, went to jail and preserved the honour of their country. Those who were steeped in lucury would be unable to bear jail life where they would not get tea ten times a day and would not get fine clothes.

For the sake of your religion you should give up all luxury and begin to wear khadi. Until India gets swaraj and the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs are righted, everybody should regard foreign cloth as not permissible. When we get swaraj, we would be able to prepare all kinds of swadeshi cloth and so you shall have to give up all luxury for six months.
He was very happy to hear of the spinning of Mrs. Haji Yousuf Sobhani. They should all keep the charkha near them as they kept their sons in their laps. Remembering God in their heart, they should spin on the charkha for the sake of swaraj and Khilafat at least for some hours every day. By the charkha not only the honour of Indian womanhood would be preserved, but they would be in a position to earn an independent living within doors. They could do more for the cause of their country by the charkha than by the sword. Many Indians got about Rs.8 to Rs.15 a month which was not quite sufficient for the maintenance of their families. In Bijapur, Bahen Ganga introduced two thousand charkhas into the homes of poor Indians, and as a result of this they were getting good and commendable hand-spun yarn from that place and they (the poor Indians) were earning thereby an independent living.

Continuing, the Mahatma said that they could manufacture the best Dacca muslin formerly, but owing to the present Government, their weavers were in a sorry plight and were quite unable to do their professional work. They should not go to Manchester for fine cloth. One Indian woman had given him an embroidered sari weighing about twelve seers and if they could wear saris of such weight, why could they not wear saris made of khaddar? Women could undergo greater pains and trouble than men and therefore nothing prevented them from the free use of the khadi. Mrs. Mazhar-ul-Huq gave him four bangles of diamond. Such a sacrifice showed that the swaraj was coming nearer for women loved their ornaments very much. That woman was beautiful who had got in her heart the idea of God. They should give up all outward signs of beauty. They should not go to Japan, France and China for fine cloth. They should all pray for the success of Hindus and Muslims, but their prayers would be effective when they had pure hearts and bodies covered with swadeshi cloth. That was a difficult resolution. But if they once determined to resort to it, it would be very easy indeed.
Concluding, the Mahatma exhorted those present by saying that they either should burn foreign cloth or send it to Smyrna. He thanked them for inviting him and giving him a patient hearing.90

Gail Minault points out that in order to make the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements popular among the Muslim women, religious items and anti-British sentiments were skilfully used. Indeed, Muslim women became “a powerful opinion group within the Khilafat movement, supporting it morally with their firm religious faith and financially with their ornaments”.91

Apart from Gandhi, Bi Amman also made efforts to bring the Muslim women into the national mainstream. During the period 1920-22, as has already been pointed out, she toured different parts of the subcontinent to popularize the Khilafat issue. In an open letter written by her in 1920, Bi Amman made the following remarks: “We had been sacrificing ourselves for our fathers, husbands and sons, but so long as this spirit of Indian womanhood is not lost, I, for one, feel that nothing which really matters is lost”.92 She was an ardent votary of Hindu-Muslim unity and was persevering in her efforts of propagating the Swadeshi cause. Under the influence of Gandhi, she had herself started wearing khadi clothes. In her various speeches addressed to women, she exhorted women to take to spinning of the charkha.

In conclusion we may say that although “women’s participation in the first non-cooperation movement was not on a mass scale and was mainly confined to those, whose husbands, fathers, brothers or sons had already joined the struggle and were in jail”, 93 there can be no denying that Indian women had made significant contributions both to the Khilafat cause and to the Non-cooperation campaign initiated by Gandhi. A Government of India publication observed that “the growing interest displayed by upper and middle class women in political and social questions, their increasing prominence on the platform and in the press … must be taken as the dawn of a new era; and the fact that the number of women who take part in public life is still very small affords no reason for questioning its significance.94 Margaret Cousins also pointed out that the Non-
cooperation movement gave a big boost to the awakening of Indian women, and that “women’s ardent desire for the freedom of their country has given them such personal freedom that they are now welcomed into the open street as volunteers, as pickets, as politicians... They (i.e., women) do not naturally move towards fighting for their own freedom, but through throwing themselves into a ‘cause’ they achieve their own liberation... The Indian national movement cannot progress without the aid of women; the liberation of women will be aided by their devotion to the national movement”.95
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid., pp.124-25


6. Gandhi’s views on Khilafat were published in Navjivan, 30 January, 1921. Also see Young India, 25 August, 1920.

7. See Manmohan Kaur, op. cit., p.140.

8. Navjivan, 4-7-1920. Also see Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (hereinafter CWMG), Vol.XVIII, p.8.


26. The Amritsar session was very significant for Gandhi’s political career because Gandhi’s close association with the Congress started with this. To quote him “I must regard my participation in Congress proceedings at Amritsar as my real entrance into the Congress politics. My attendance at the previous Congresses was nothing more perhaps than an annual renewal of allegiance to the Congress”. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, op. cit., 1927, p.369.
27. The text of the treaty with Turkey was published along with a message from the Viceroy to the Muslim People of India urging them to accept “Terms which I fear will be painful to all Muslims. This message is cited in the Indian Annual Register—1921, Vol. 1.
28. The findings of the Hunter Committee were so one-sided that it was not acceptable to the Indian members. The latter came out with a Minority Report which ruthlessly condemned the British authorities, military as well as civil. Gandhi condemned the Hunter Committee findings as “an attempt to condone official lawlessness” and said that it was “page after page of thinly disguised official whitewash”. See Young India, 9 June, 1920. Also see CWMG, Vol.XVIII, p.482.
29. Young India, 29 September 1921.
30. Cited in S.R.Bakshi, Documents of Non-cooperation Movement (Delhi, 1989), p.3.

31. However, there were some opponents too, namely, C.R. Das, B.C. Pal, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Joseph Baptista, M.A. Jinha and Satyamurti.

32. Navajivan, 3-11-1920. Also see CWMG, Vol. XVIII, pp.391-95.


34. The Bombay Chronicle, 1-12-1920. Also see CWMG, Vol.XIX, pp.44-45.


37. Transcript of Interview with Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Oral History Section, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.


40. CWMG, Vol.XVIII, p.20. It is, however, interesting to note that even for a dedicated Gandhian like Sarala Devi, shifting over to Khadi clothes in the initial stages was not very easy.

41. Sarala Devi Chaudharani. At the Point of Spindle (Ganesh and Company, Madras, 1922). p.3.

42. Radha Devi was the wife of Lala Lajpat Rai. Parvati Devi was a teacher in Amritsar who was firmly committed to propagating the Gandhian ideology of Swadeshi. She was arrested in Meerut in December 1922 for her provocative speeches which the British found highly objectionable.


44. The Tribune, 22 March, 1922.

46. The Tribune, 1 October, 1921 and 21 January, 1922.

47. CWMG, Vol.XVII,pp.31-32. Gandhi also expressed satisfaction at the enthusiasm shown by the women of Rawalpindi.


50. Anasuya Sarabhai ultimately divorced her husband, a rare thing in those times. She also studied in England where she got an opportunity to interact with George Bernard Shaw and Beatrice Webb. On her return to India, she opened a school for the children workers of Calico Mills owned by her family. She even opened crèches for the women workers of this mill.


52. See Young India. 29-9-1920.

53. Gandhi said this during the course of his address to women at Kadiwani in Ahmedabad on 3-10-1920. See Mahadev Desai, op.cit.,p.35.

54. Navjivan.1-5-1921. Also see CWMG,Vol.XX,pp.,50-51.

55. Nandubehn was the wife of Dr. Balvantrai Kanuga, a close associate of Vallabhai Patel. Gandhi felt extremely happy at the role played by women as volunteers at the Ahmedabad Congress. See CWMG, Vol.XXII, pp.185-86.

56. Avantikabai Gokhale was married to a Bombay engineer, Baban Gokhale. She was born in 1882.


58. Grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, Perin Captain was born in 1888. She was married to D.S. Captain, a reputed lawyer. From 1920 she began to wear Khadi clothes and play an active part in popularizing the Swadeshi cause in association with her sisters, Goshibehn Captain and Khurshed Naoroji.
59. They belonged to the highly respected family of the Petits. This name is well known in Bombay in the form of Petit Library, Petit Hospital and other charitable institutions. Mithubehn later shifted to Surat and was actively associated with the Bardoli Satyagraha.

60. The Faizi Sisters, namely, Atiya, Zohra and Nazli were the first women members to have gone abroad for education. They played a significant role in popularizing Khadi among the Muslim women.

61. Manekbai Bahadurji was the daughter of Dr. Atmaram. Under the inspiration of Gandhi, she had learned to spin personally and tried to propagate the concept of spinning through the Sevasadan.

62. Sarojini Naidu was among the most devoted disciples of Gandhi who became the President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and also of the Rashtriya Stree Sabha. She also became the President of the Indian National Congress in 1926.


64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., pp.180-181.

66. The Hindu, 8-4-1921. Also see CWMG. Vol.XIX, p.509.


69. Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, op.cit., p.113.


75. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1922 (Report on the Native Newspapers of Bengal, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta).


78. Samaj, 28 March 1921.

79. Ibid.

80. V. Rajendra Raju, Role of Women in India's Freedom Struggle (Delhi, 1994), p.29.


83. See V. Rajendra Raju, op.cit., p.33.

84. While emphasizing on the need to work on the Charkha and spinning everyday on a regular basis, Gopabandhu Das said to women: "Devote atleast six hours daily to spinning. It will keep your mind steady and pure. Mother India desires it from you". See Samaj, 27 August, 1921.

85. Samaj, 3 September, 1921.

86. "Our motherland is the rosary of our action and religion The spinning wheels, Our life's dearest companion? Sacrifice your life adhering to the Gandhian norms, present at the feet of the motherland. Floral tributes besmeared with blood. We shall break the enemy's layrinth." See V. Rajendra Raju, op.cit., p.42.

87. Ibid., p.36.


89. Cited in Bina Kumari Sarma, op.cit., p.84.
90. The Bombay Chronicle, 20-7-1921. Also see CWMG, Vol.XX, pp.396-98.


94. L.F. Rushbrook Williams, India in 1922 (Calcutta), p.222.