CHAPTER III

THE BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN CLOTH
AND FOREIGN GOODS
The boycott of foreign goods and foreign cloth was an important item in the programme of the Non-co-operation Movement. Gandhiji was opposed to the boycott of foreign goods. He stood for swadeshi cloth, and insisted to increase the production of khadi.¹

The campaign for swadeshi formed a very important aspect of the Non-co-operation Movement. It aimed at stopping use of all foreign goods in general and foreign cloth in particular. It was basically an economic proposition for Gandhiji. But he had moral and aesthetic reasons as well for promoting the use of Khadi. A large amount of Indian money was going abroad annually for the import of cloth. This could be saved from going out and, at the same time, employment could be provided to a large number of the then professionally deprived Indian weaving community. Gandhiji rightly observed that "without a cottage industry the Indian peasant is doomed."² This programme of Non-co-operation Movement was aimed at saving India from economic ruin by removing the drain on her resources involved in the purchase of foreign-made cloth, and ensuring the possibility of Indian-made cloth so cheap


that none of India's poor would have to go naked. 3

The A.I.C.C. advised all persons belonging to the Congress to "discard the use of foreign cloth as from the 1st day of August 1921 ...". 4 For this purpose the picketing campaign against foreign cloth was suggested. Gandhiji defined it as the "methodology of violence". 5 Now the boycott of foreign cloth was to be carried out along with redoubled efforts for the increase of the output of Khadi. To increase the production of Khadi the A.I.C.C. instructed all Congress organisations to popularise spinning and weaving in educational institutions and to open Khadi stores, in every village, where all the accessories required for spinning and weaving could be available. 6 People also adopted the 'swadeshi vow' as suggested by Gandhiji, and thus Khadi became the positive aspect of the boycott programme. 7

Bonfire: Bonfire of foreign cloth was accepted as a part of this movement. 8 Many criticised Gandhiji for making a bonfire of foreign clothes. C.F. Andrews 9 was one such

4. The Indian National Congress - 1920-23, p. 64.
8. The Bombay Chronicle, 2nd August 1921.
9. C.F. Andrews (1871-1940), famous journalist and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi; wrote several books on Gandhiji.
critic. To him it appeared as a "subtle appeal to racial feeling", and he feared that it would lead back to "old bad and selfish nationalism". But in making a bonfire of foreign cloth, Gandhiji was not motivated by any ill-will towards either England or Englishmen. He simply wished that by these bonfires India would try to be self-sufficient in her cloth requirement.

The boycott movement became popular in C.P. before the special session of Congress at Calcutta. The first reported news about the boycott of foreign cloth in C.P. came from Khandwa. While giving the details of the activities of 1st August 1920, the Karamavir reports: "use of swadeshi was propagated, bonfire of foreign cloth was lit at public place." The moderate group of Nagpur generally used to criticise the policy of N.C.O., but the boycott of British goods was strongly supported by them. While showing the public enthusiasm at Nagpur, the "Times of India" reported, "during this week mass meetings are held every day ... last evening under the auspices of the Bharat Seva Sangh, in the cotton market (Nagpur) an open air meeting attended by 5000 people, with Mr Sunderlal ... of Allahabad in the chair, was held ... caps and foreign articles worth about Rs. 5000 were burnt to ashes amid enthusiasm."

The public spirit was again mobilised by Gandhiji's visit to Central Provinces. He appealed to the people at Dhamtari\textsuperscript{16} and Chhindwara\textsuperscript{17} to take a vow to wear Khadi cloth throughout their life. At the call of the 'All India College Students Conference' the college students of C.P. and Berar also joined the movement, and made a bonfire of foreign clothes in various parts of the Province.\textsuperscript{18} In January 1921, Pt. Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, Sunder Lal, Khandekar and a few others visited Balaghat and Karaseoni. On their arrival, a public meeting was organised at Balaghat under the presidency of Rai Durga Prasad. The meeting ended with a big bonfire of foreign clothes.\textsuperscript{19}

The intensity of the boycott movement was taken as a challenge by the Provincial government. The local authorities tried to suppress the movement by enforcing

\textsuperscript{13} Karanavir, (Jabalpur), 6 Aug. 1920; MPOG East Nimar, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{14} NAI, Home Pol. F-70, CPB FR-2, Sept. 1920, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{15} Times of India (Bombay), 17 Dec. 1920, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{16} Madhya Pradesh Aur Gandhi, (Indore, Govt. Pub.) p. 11.
\textsuperscript{17} CMG, Vol. LX, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{18} "Students were asked to use swadeshi goods even at a sacrifice" Reso. No. 6 - All India College Students Conference, Nagpur, 25 December 1920; The Tribune, 29 Dec. 1920; MPPAM, p. 307.
unjust laws and issuing insulting orders. A teacher of Model School, Jabalpur, Diwakar Rao Bagad Deo was discharged from service for wearing Khadi clothes and a Gandhi cap. This was strongly resented by the people.  

The Karamavir strongly criticised the order of suspension issued by A.G. Dix, Superintendent of Model School, Jabalpur and asked the students to oppose this "unjust act of ... autocratic authority." In the meantime, riots were started at Nagpur which were the outcome of bonfires organised at different parts of the city. The riots ended with Police firing. The Government took the matter seriously, and the Judicial Commissioner of Nagpur prohibited all the employees of his office from wearing the Gandhi cap. The Maharashtra (Nagpur) and the Young Patriot (Nagpur) strongly criticised the order of the Judicial Commissioner and condemned the administration of Sir Frank Sly. The matter was discussed in the Central Provinces Legislative Council, and Seth Sheolal, M.L.C. registered his objection to the issuing of such a

23. The Maharashtra (Nagpur), 20 April 1921; Young Patriot (Nagpur), 4 April 1921.
24. Sir Frank Sly; Sly Sir Frank George, K.C.B.I.; Educ: Balliol Coll: Oxford. Ent. I.C.S., 1885; Inspecter General of Agriculture 1904-05; Member of Royal Commission on Indian Services, 1912; Member of Franchise Committee 1918-19; Chief Commissioner, C.P. and Berar 1920; Governor C.P. and Berar 1921.
circular. Later on, this Gandhi cap circular was also discussed in the meeting of the House of Commons, London. Wearing of Gandhi cap was also prohibited in the Training College, Jabalpur. This order was bitterly criticised by the members of the legislative council. In spite of Government’s ban on Gandhi caps, its popularity and use increased day by day. Mahatma Gandhi also encouraged the people to adopt completely swadeshi clothes. He also suggested the ways to boycott the foreign cloth. Seeing the increasing popularity of the swadeshi movement, the government of India directed all the local governments to adopt repressive measures to check it. It also suggested a plan to counteract the boycott of foreign clothes which included the increase in the Police force, and severe punishments to the picketers etc.

The succeeding months of 1921 were remarkable for the great insistence placed on the constructive side of Congress activities and at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. held at Bombay (Aug. 1921), attention was specially concentrated upon “attaining the complete boycott of

27. CPIC 1921, Vol. I p. 263, Member, Mohamed Ahmed, dt. 15 March 1921.
28. CHMG, Vol. XX p. 112. ‘Gandhiji’s speech between Khandwa and Bhusawal on way side stations, 21 May 1921.
29. The Bombay Chronicle, 4th July 1921; CHMG, Vol. XX, 321; Young India, 6 July 1921.
30. NAI, Home Pol. F-170, 1921, H.D. Craik, to Chief Secretaries of all local governments, dt. 23 July 1921.
foreign cloth by the 30th September next and manufacture of Khaddar by stimulating hand-spinning and hand-weaving.\textsuperscript{31} The leading figure of Jabalpur, Seth Govind Das, intensified the non-co-operation movement throughout the province. Emphasizing his efforts for boycott of clothes, the Sankalpa (Nagpur) says:

Baboo Govind Dasji, the grandson of Raja Gokuldasji of Jabalpur, has in obedience to the Congress mandate, shown an unprecedented and patriotic self-sacrifice by putting a stop to the transactions in foreign cloth through his well known firm in Calcutta, and thereby willingly suffering a loss of about a lakh of rupees per annum. His example is really commendable to the commercial classes. ...\textsuperscript{32}

Jamna Lal Bajaj led the movement in the Marathi region. He persuaded a prominent cloth merchant in Nagpur, Seth Pooran Chand Ranka, to give up his business and join him in urging merchants to spin and wear Khadi and seal their stock of foreign cloth.\textsuperscript{33} As part of the campaign, Bajaj, Ranka and other leaders held meetings and processions, burnt foreign clothes and picketed some foreign cloth shops. These agitations involved all merchants in the bigger Marathi towns.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, Bajaj, Pt. Sunder Lal and Lala Bhagwandin attracted some members of the working classes in Nagpur to the Congress and pleader

\textsuperscript{31} Report of the C.P. Enquiry Committee, p. 10; Praja Sewak (Hoshangabad) 6 Oct. 1921.
\textsuperscript{32} NAI, JCPB, p. 333, Sankalpa (Nagpur), 6 Aug. 1921.
\textsuperscript{33} DNS, Vol. III, pp. 494-5.
\textsuperscript{34} NAI, Home Pol. F-18 CPB FR I Sept. 1921, p. 12.
Samiullah Khan and Maulvi Abdul Natique also obtained the support of Momin weavers for swadeshi work. It resulted in the widespread use of the Gandhi cap in Nagpur and other towns, an evidence of Gandhiji's popularity among the population at large. 35

In Chhattisgarh, people made a door-to-door campaign and collected foreign clothes and organised bonfires on the public squares. People even enjoyed their Holi festival by burning their foreign clothes. Prabhu Lal Kabra and Ratnakar Jha took the main lead during this campaign. 36 This campaign was continued for months at Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg, and Rajnandgaon. In the meantime, the Raipur Municipality took an exemplary decision by which Khadi dress was made compulsory for all the municipal servants and students of Municipal schools at Raipur. 37 Gandhiji congratulated Raipur Municipality for this decision and asked other municipalities to follow the example. 38 Raipur Congress Committee also distributed 460 charkhas to increase the production of Khadi. 39 By the persuasion of the Bilaspur Congress Committee, the cloth merchants of Bilaspur agreed to stop the sale of foreign cloth. Likewise, 2000 charkhas were purchased at Bilaspur by the efforts of Ganpatilal Vaishya, Gajadhar

35. NML, Seth Govind Das Ms, Letter of M.D. Lavangia Dt. 30 Aug. 1921; Hitavada, 2 April 1921, p. 4; NAI, Home Pol. F-63 CPB FR-2 May 1921, p. 23.
Saw (Mungeli), Manohar Lal Shukla, Seth Naubat Ramji (Katghora), Roopchand Sharma (Seepat), Baba Purusottam Das (Ratanpur), Hafiz Hakim Saheb (Janjgir), Siddheswar Trivedi, Siddha Gopal Tiwari, Badrinath Jha and Ganga Prasad Tiwari (Bilaspur). The youth workers of Bilaspur, Sarvadutta Bajpai, Amar Singh Sahgal, Devtadeen Tiwari, Jamuna Prasad Verma and Kailash Saxena opened Khadi Bhandare in Bilaspur district and popularized the use of Khadi among the people.

At Saugor, a huge bonfire of foreign clothes was made on the occasion of Mohurrum. Here Khadi became so popular that even "the Gods in temples were softly dressed in garments of Khadi on show-nights." A Khadi Bhandar was opened in Saraswati Library, and a weaving factory was established at Sadar market, Saugor. A sum of rupees 25,000 was donated by Harishankar Vyas for the purpose of Khadi propaganda in Saugor district. Activities in Saugor district were mainly led by Sambhu Dayal Mishra, Ramkrishna Pandey, Vasudeo Rao Subedar, Kedarnath Rohan, Vishwash Rao

41. Ibid., p. 81.
Bhave, Keshav Ramchandra Khandekar, Seth Chotelal, Baldeo Prasad and Abdul Gani. Khurai tahsil of Sauger district was the most active village of the province, and it inspired other villages to participate in the boycott movement.

The P.C.C. drew the members of the Muslim community into the agitation, and the boycott activities were specially carried out on the occasion of Muhurram (1921) on a large scale throughout the province, which contributed to harmony between the Hindus and Muslims of the Province. The Hindu-Muslim harmony was again reflected during the bonfires arranged at Jabalpur (12 Sept. 1921) and Chhindwara.

Till the middle of 1921, the Tilakites of Nagpur remained lukewarm towards the campaign. Seth Govind Das visited Nagpur and persuaded the Congress workers, with the result that Khaparde and his colleagues agreed to

43. Ramkrishna Pandey, "Unpublished Autobiography"(Sauger) pp. 101-105; - At Sauger the biggest collection of foreign clothes was found in the house of Vasudeo Rao Subedar. Later on, these were all thrown in the bonfire; NML, Seth Govind Das MS., letter from Govind Rao Lokras (Sauger) Dt. 3 Oct. 1921.

44- Khurai was selected by the P.C.C. for launching the Civil Disobedience Movement in Feb. 1922.

45. NAI, Home Pol. F-18, CP 8 FR-1 Sept. 1921, p. 12.

support the movement with some restrictions.\textsuperscript{47} Whereas the Gandhians of the Marathi region remained active throughout the movement, Wardha, as a "growing commercial town and ... a large cotton centre", was the most active city throughout the whole Marathi region.\textsuperscript{48} A 'Swadeshi meeting' was held at Wardha on 2 October 1921 under the presidentship of Jamanalal Bajaj in which speeches were delivered by Rambhau Pingle, Shravane, and B.S. Pathick. After the meeting was over, Seth Kamalnayan Bajaj lighted the bonfire of foreign clothes worth about rupees 10,000 of which cloth worth rupees 6,000 belonged to his father Seth Jamanalal Bajaj alone.\textsuperscript{49}

In the mean time, Gandhiji issued an appeal to the countrymen for the adoption of Khadi. This appeal was signed by the prominent figures of C.P. who included Dr. B.S. Moonje, Jamanalal Bajaj, M.R. Cholkar and M.S. Aney.\textsuperscript{50} As a result of Gandhiji's appeal, efforts were intensified in C.P. to popularize the use of Khadi. Hindi C.P. received rupees 35,000 as financial help from the

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\item \textit{Bombay Chronicle}, 14 Sept. 1921, p. 7; NAI, IFCPR, 1921, p. 177; Lekmat, (Yeotmal) 22 April 1921; Ibid., pp. 486-87; Young Patriot, (Nagpur) 17 Oct. 1921; NAI, Khaparde MS, Diary, 1 Aug. 1921.
\item \textit{Bombay Chronicle}, 7 Jan. 1921, p. 9; NAI, IFCPR, 1921, p. 486; Young Patriot, (Nagpur), 17 Oct. 1921.
\item NAI, IP, 1921, p. 470; Rajasthan Kesari, (Wardha), 9 Oct. 1921; CHMG, Vol. XIX, p. 445-6; Shreerathi Jamanalal, p. 58.
\item Gandhi Sangrahalya, Delhi, S.No., 7633; CHMG XXI, p. 235.
\end{enumerate}
A.I.C.C. for the popularization of Khadi.\textsuperscript{51} Khadi week was celebrated at Rawanbhata ground of Raipur from 7th to 15th of October 1921, where a large number of foreign clothes were burnt.\textsuperscript{52}

The boycott movement became so popular that the Railway employees of Jabalpur also joined it and replaced their European hats with white Gandhi caps.\textsuperscript{53} According to the wishes of Gandhiji, this item of the boycott movement was continued even after the suspension of Non-co-operation Movement. The C.P. Legislative Council also passed a resolution to stop the purchase of foreign articles in future.\textsuperscript{54} Soon, with the existing stock of 40,000 charkhas\textsuperscript{55} Madhya Pradesh started the production of Khadi, and fulfilled the requirement of the downtrodden and weaker section of society. Thus a step towards economic independence was taken which ultimately led India to the final goal, Swaraj.

\textsuperscript{51} Rs. 15,000 were given to Jabalpur DCC.
Rs. 5,000 were given to Sagar DCC.
Rs. 5,000 were given to Chhindwara DCC., NML, A.I.C.C. papers, file No. 6, 1922.

\textsuperscript{52} "Annual Report", Nagar Palika Nigam, Raipur, 1971-72, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{53} Bombay Chronicle, 17 Sept. 1921, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{54} CPC, Vol. II 1924, pp. 296-331.

\textsuperscript{55} NML, A.I.C.C. papers, file 6, 1922 p. 198. "Report of Non-Co-operation work in Hindustani C.P. during the years 1921 with accounts of the P.C.C."
But the figures given by A.I.C.C. report indicate:
C.P. Hindustani ... 25,000 Charkhas.
C.P. Marathi ... 3,804 Charkhas.
Berar ... 1,600 Charkhas.
Report of the C.D. Enquiry Committee, appointed by the A.I.C.C." Appendix III.