Chapter II.

1921-22 NON-COOPERATION

The special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September 1920 decided to give up the old path of constitutional agitation and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-cooperation for the attainment of Swaraj. The regular session of the Congress held in Nagpur in December 1920 ratified the Calcutta resolution. This decision of non-cooperation was the direct outcome of the Khilafat movement.

The non-cooperation movement had two aspects - positive and protestant or negative. Promotion of Swadeshi goods, revival of hand spinning and domestic weaving, removal of untouchability from the Hindu society, promotion of unity among Hindus and Muslims, prohibition of the use of intoxicants and alcoholic drinks and raising of a fund of one crore of rupees to constitute the Tilak Memorial Swarajya Fund were the positive aspects of the programmes of non-cooperation. These activities later on formed part of constructive programmes. Boycott of legislatures, courts, Government aided educational institutions, surrender of titles and honours awarded by the Government and boycott of foreign goods represented protest and were regarded by some as the negative aspects of the movement.
In pursuance of the constructive programmes it was also decided to enrol a volunteer corps of one crore participants for helping the promotion of various boycott programmes, to distribute 20 lakhs spinning wheels amongst the workers and to replace foreign clothes by Khadi, i.e., Indian homemade cloth.

The Assam Association sent a delegation comprising of Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Chandranath Sarma, Faiznur Ali Dalim Chandra Bora and few others to attend the special session of Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920. In this session the members of the Association abstained from voting as they found themselves divided on the issue of non-cooperation. Most of the members from the Brahmaputra valley were opposed to the proposal of non-cooperation. Chandranath Sarma and Dalim Chand Bora remained neutral on this issue.

After coming back to Assam, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi called an extra-ordinary session of the Assam Association on 3 October 1920 at Nowgong to discuss the Congress resolution on non-cooperation as initiated by Gandhiji. In the meantime, the feelings and sentiments of the people of Assam grew in favour of the non-cooperation movement. Thus the Association had to change its views and support Gandhiji's path. A propaganda campaign in favour of the non-cooperation movement was started in Assam soon thereafter. In order to ensure widespread
propaganda campaign on non-cooperation meetings of the Assam Association were held at Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Nowgong in the first half of October 1920.

At Sibsagar moderates like Ghanasyam Baruah, Gongagobinda Phukan, and Taraprasad Chaliha were opposed to the non-cooperation programme. Thus moderates held the view that the Assam Association should fight on local issues only.

But in the subsequent meeting held at Jorhat, a resolution was adopted in favour of non-cooperation. In order to put an end to the controversy and to review the Jorhat resolution, a special session of the Assam Association was held at Gauhati on 11 and 12 October 1920. The Gauhati session was attended by 25 delegates and a few students and members of the public as well. Tarun Ram Phukan, Chandranath Sarma, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and many others in their speeches supported the programme of non-cooperation. The general opinion in the meeting was that Assam should not stay aloof from the mainstream of the nationalist politics of India. The decisions taken in the Gauhati session were in conformity with the decisions of the Nagpur Congress and these were: an organized boycott of the sale of excisable goods, promotion of hand spinning and other Swadeshi goods and the boycott of the forthcoming election to the Council to be held in accordance with the Act of 1919.

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and some of his colleagues from Assam attended the Nagpur Congress of December 1920
where the resolution of non-violent non-cooperation as an weapon to fight for freedom was passed. Bordoloi and his group wholeheartedly supported Gandhi.\(^{10}\) Gandhi announced in this session that the constructive programme would be carried on along with the non-cooperation programmes. The constitution of the Congress was also prepared in this session and Bordoloi also offered his assistance in drafting it.\(^{11}\)

The seventh Annual Conference of Assam Association held at Tezpur 26-28 December 1920 endorsed the decisions taken in the special session of Gauhati (October 1920) in favour of participation in the non-cooperation movement, and as defined later by the Nagpur Congress.\(^{12}\) This session of the Assam Association was in fact its last annual conference to be followed by two special sittings in Sibsagar and Jorhat in April 1921. The proceedings of the Tezpur session were conducted at the initiative of Chandranath Sarma in such a way that the replacement of the Association by a Congress Committee became inevitable\(^{13}\) and this session was virtually transformed into a Congress forum. Soon thereafter the Assam Association became a defunct body to pave the way for the formation of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee.

After the Nagpur session, a meeting of the AICC was held at Bezwada in March 1921. The resolutions of this meeting called upon the Congress workers to collect
an amount of one crore rupees to constitute the Tilak Swaraj Fund, enroll one crore members to the Congress and to introduce 20 lakhs Charkhas into the Indian households. The deadline for the achievement of these targets was fixed on or before 30 June 1921.\textsuperscript{14} Gandhiji appealed to the people of different provinces to share the responsibility of collecting the money for the Tilak Fund. The minimum amount that a province should raise was also specified.\textsuperscript{15}

As the amounts for the fund were fixed on the basis of population, Assam (excluding the Surma valley which was under the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee) with a population of 40 lakhs was asked to enroll one lakh 4-anna Congress members, contribute one lakh rupees to the Tilak Fund and to introduce 26000 Charkhas\textsuperscript{*} in Assam. By the stipulated date, i.e. 30 June 1921, the target was accomplished in Assam.\textsuperscript{16}

**Formation of the A.P.C.C.** In the Nagpur Congress of December 1920 the principle of linguistic province for future Congress organization was accepted. The new Congress constitution provided for the formation of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee for the Brahmaputra Valley area where Assamese is the dominating language. In January 1921, the Congress passed a resolution allocating five seats in the AICC for the members from Assam.
The decision to form the Provincial Congress Committee was taken in the Tezpur session. The Province was so long represented in the Congress through the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. A meeting of the defunct Assam Association was held at the initiative of its leaders at Gauhati in Nabin Chandra Bordoloi's house on 5 June 1921 to form the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. The outcome of this meeting was the birth of the A.P.C.C.¹⁸

The first A.P.C.C. was formed with six Brahmaputra valley districts (Kamrup, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Darrang and Goalpara). The headquarters was set up at Gauhati. It was a seven member committee with Kuladhar Chaliha as President and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi as General Secretary.¹⁹ But this Committee was reconstituted in July 1921 primarily to accommodate Tarun Ram Phukan. Chaliha volunteered to step down and Phukan was installed as President of the APCC.²⁰

Soon after its constitution, the APCC decided to invite Gandhiji to Assam, and accordingly in the Bombay session held in July 1921, the Assam delegation invited Gandhiji to visit Assam.²¹

In the meantime non-cooperation movement had made considerable progress in the Brahmaputra valley districts of Assam. Congress Committees from District to the Mouza level were formed.²² Non-cooperation propaganda meetings
were held in all parts of the province. Hartals and proce-
ssions were organized. Students studying in schools and 
colleges above the age of 16 boycotted their institutions.
Prafulla Chandra Barua of Sibsagar, a college student in 
Calcutta, was the first student from Assam and possibly in 
India to boycott college. In response to the call given 
by the Congress and also in conformity with the decision of 
the All India Students Conference held simultaneously with 
the Nagpur Congress, the students of Assam, under instructions 
from of Chandranath Sarma, boycotted Government aided school 
and colleges in large numbers. National schools were opened 
for the students in different places of Assam at the initiative of Chandranath Sarma, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Ambikagiri 
Rai Choudhury and others. The scheme and curriculum suitable 
for the National schools in Assam were prepared by Chandranath 
Sarma in conformity with Gandhi's ideals.

Lawyers in large numbers boycotted the Courts.
Chandranath Sarma was the first of the lawyers of Assam to 
suspend practice. They came out in large numbers to lead the 
people in the movement.

The lawyers and students took up extensive organiza-
tional and propaganda work. A large number of meetings were 
held and as many as 30 meetings were held in the Kamrup dis-
trict alone within a fortnight in February 1921. In the 
meetings the leaders spoke about Swadeshi, Khilafat and the
temperance movement. The meaning and aim of non-cooperation were explained to the people. The response of the people of Assam to the call for non-cooperation was unprecedented. Every meeting held for this purpose was attended by thousands. They worked for Swadeshi, boycotted foreign goods, campaigned against opium and encouraged village panchayats.  

The tempo of non-cooperation in Assam was raised to a great height after Gandhi's visit to Assam. Immediately after the Nagpur Congress Gandhiji decided to take an extensive tour of the country to propagate non-cooperation. At the request of the Assam leaders at the Bombay session, Gandhi decided to visit Assam cancelling his Andhra tour. Accompanied by an eleven member team consisting of Jamunalal Bajaj, Muhammad Ali and Begum I. Ali, Azad Shobhani, Jamuna Das and Prabhu Das, Abdul Hyat, Hiroo and Krishna Das, Gandhi reached Assam by 18 August 1921. Mahadev Desai came as Gandhi's personal secretary. As desired by Gandhi, a 12-day tour programme covering all the important towns of both the valleys of Assam was prepared.  

At Guahati, a big crowd was waiting in the lawn of Tarun Ram Phukan's house to see Gandhi. The number of Congress workers coming from different parts of Assam to meet Gandhiji and to invite him to their respective places was so great that they themselves formed a big crowd. A meeting held in the same evening there was addressed by Gandhi. Gandhi's speech in Hindi was translated by Tarun Ram Phukan
into Assamese. At the end of the meeting Gandhi asked the audience whether they were collecting there simply to listen to him or "was it their object to allay his hearts agony by helping him in redressing the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and in winning of Swaraj or freedom for India". He asked the people to let him leave Assam cancelling other programmes in the province if the former was their intention. Few moments later sky was filled with one voice - "No, no, that must never be, we cannot allow you to leave us and go back in the way proposed". Then Gandhi wanted to test the genuine ness of their enthusiasm. He asked the people to surrender the foreign clothes they were wearing and proposed to put all the clothes into a fire. At these words of Gandhi, a sort of frenzy seized the whole crowd and people from all sides started to throw the foreign clothes they were wearing into the fire and some of them brought themselves to semi-naked condition. The heap of clothes was so huge that it kept burning till the next morning. Such a spirit and enthusiasm of the people of Assam moved everyone in Gandhi's party. Next day Gandhi attended three meetings of the women.

After Gauhati, Gandhi and his party went to Tezpur, Nowgong, Jorhat and Dibrugarh. In all these places Gandhi addressed meetings. Burning of foreign clothes was accomplished in all places except Dibrugarh. In spite of the Government's unhelpful attitude and promulgation of prohibitory orders people's response all throughout Assam was as
encouraging as in Gauhati. At Jorhat thousands attended the meeting inspite of heavy rains. The enthusiasm of the crowd was so great that Indian sepoys-on-duty also joined the crowd in shouting slogans 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi). Even old and ailing persons came walking long distances up to 50 miles to Jorhat to see Gandhi and listen to him. At Dibrugarh, besides addressing public meetings Gandhi also met the tea garden labourers and had a private sitting with the European Planters Association.

Everywhere in Assam the Mahatma was treated with royal honour. The accompanying party was impressed by the enthusiasm and the sense of discipline of the people in general and the volunteers in particular.

Gandhi and his party left for the Surma valley after a 10-day tour of the Brahmaputra valley. His visit to Assam had a tremendous impact on the general people and inspired the volunteers to work more vigorously.

The lawyers and clerks who were so long hesitating to suspend their professional work came out to join the non-cooperation movement in large numbers. Gandhi himself commented that the percentage of those boycotting the legal practice was the highest in Assam. Many Government officers including police officers and constables, school teachers and mouzadars resigned and joined the movement.
order to popularize Swadeshi, customers were asked to verify the genuineness of Swadeshi goods before purchasing the articles. Traders were warned against breaking of their promise that they made before Gandhiji to refrain from selling foreign goods and asked them to display Swadeshi certificate. Burning of foreign goods was carried on even in the interior villages during the whole month of September 1921. Gandhi, in his speech at Nowgong asked the people of Assam to implement the boycott of foreign clothes programme before 30 September 1921. As a part of non-cooperation programme, at village and mouza levels, Panchayats were formed to settle disputes of the people as substitutes to Government courts.

In the 1921 non-cooperation movement great emphasis was laid on anti-opium campaign in the Brahmaputra valley. Gandhiji also appealed to the people to remove this evil from the Assamese society. The workers of the movement started a serious campaign against opium eating even at the risk of their lives. Even common people who were not volunteers also joined this anti-opium campaign. Since anything that went against non-violence was never encouraged in the movement, the volunteers resorted only to peaceful picketing of opium and liquor shops. Some success of the temperance movement was evidenced by the fact that by the end of 1921 collection of Government excise revenue fell by 19.27%. The consumption of liquor fell by 49.3%, opium by 35.34% and Hemp (Ganja) by 24.4%. According to Congress sources, sale
of some of these items was reduced almost by 50%.\textsuperscript{40}

The thirtysixth session of the Indian National Congress was held in December 1921 at Ahmedabad and a delegation from Assam attended it. This session reaffirmed its stand to continue non-violent non-cooperation programme more vigorously by defying Government repressive policy or by means of Civil Disobedience under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. 'Civil Disobedience' (C.D) as defined by Gandhi was a 'state of peaceful rebellion - a refusal to obey every single state made law'.\textsuperscript{41} With regard to the method of implementation of the C.D. programme, the AIJC Working Committee (4.11.21) declared that the Provincial Congress Committees were allowed to undertake this programme individually at its own risk and responsibility.\textsuperscript{42}

The A.P.C.C. did not decide anything about the launching of non-cooperation as directed by the Ahmedabad session. But Phukan and Bordoloi made a joint appeal at a meeting at Boko on 26.11.21 to the people to launch the non-cooperation movement more vigorously.\textsuperscript{43} The people of Assam got prepared to launch the movement in full vigour. In the meantime rumours were afloat that certain places were selected in Assam to try Civil disobedience and that 'Gandhi Raj' would be established soon. These news penetrated deep into the remotest villages.\textsuperscript{44} In some places like
Haleswar, Mahabhairab, Luki, Bangaon, Chamaria, Bokel and Boko, people refused to pay land revenue and choukidari taxes. In Jorhat, Golaghat, Sipajhar and Patharughat also people resisted payment of Government taxes. The Government came down with strong hands to deal with the people who refused to pay taxes and fines and resorted to all kinds of repressive measures. People, irrespective of religion, joined the movement ignoring the Government repressions and, with the background of Khilafat movement, the Hindu-Muslim unity in Assam was further cemented during this period.

On the basis of the instructions issued by the AICC Working Committee on 23 November 1921 and the decision of the APCC of 27 November 1921, the Assam National Volunteer Corps was raised with the existing Khilafat and Congress volunteers. Within a very short time the number of volunteers in Assam rose to 70,000. Other volunteer bodies like the Santi Sena also grew side by side. Being considerably alarmed by the growth of these volunteer bodies, the Government declared all these organisations unlawful.

There was a great impact of the non-cooperation movement also among the tea garden labourers who were under the direct control of the European planters. It was considered highly essential by the Congress workers to propagate temperance and Swadeshi amongst them. The Congress volunteers carried on this propaganda in the village markets since they were prevented from entering the gardens. Being influenced by the ideals of non-cooperation the tea garden labourers
resorted to strikes frequently to get redress of their grievances. This gave an opportunity to the Congress workers in Assam to get closer to the tea garden labourers and to bring them to the Congress fold. In the subsequent period ex-tea garden labourers, like Arjun Ghatowar, actively joined the movement. They realised the importance of the temperance movement among the tea garden workers and could contribute significantly in this regard. The tea garden labourers used to donate whatever cash they had in the name of Gandhi when they happened to meet the Congress volunteers in the village markets.

The non-cooperation movement resulted in the arrest of 4000 people and detention of 1600. All types of repressive measures were adopted to suppress the movement under the Indian Criminal Law Act of 1908, the Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act of 1911 and the Press Act of 1910. The Government restrictions, however, could not prevent the people from enrolling in thousands as volunteers. For want of space, arrested persons were taken to distant places and let off there. All literature published on Gandhi and non-cooperation were proscribed and sometimes defamation suits were lodged against Assamese newspapers for publishing comments against the British Officers. Holding of meetings was prohibited and crowds assembled for that purpose were frequently lathi-charged. Arrested persons handcuffed and roped together were made to walk long distances to the jails.
At Boko, on one night, arrested persons in their hundreds were kept dipped up to the chest level in the waters of the Jaljali river in the severe cold of December 1921. Collective and punitive fines were levied indiscriminately and Congress camps were either burnt down or demolished. Within the period of 9 weeks from 24 November 1921 to 31 January 1922, 477 non-cooperators of the Brahmaputra valley were imprisoned for various terms.

The armed police raided the houses of the villagers who resisted payment of fines. The police went to the extent of taking away ornaments from the women inmates by use of force. The Mouzadars and Gaonburhas were made to work as agents of the Government and those who refused to help were either fined or dismissed from service.

When the stories of repression in Assam were related in the Ahmedabad Congress of December 1921, Gandhi sent Madan Mohan Malavya and Rajendra Prasad to Assam for making an on-the-spot investigation. Malavya and Rajendra Prasad reached Cauhati on 28 May 1922. After visiting different places they expressed their shock at the extent of repression and excesses committed on the people of Assam. Malavya accused the Government of Assam of being the most repressive among the provinces of India, inspite of the fact that there was no violence on the part of the people during the movement.
In the Assam Legislative Council in 1924, Saraprasad Chaliha suggested the constitution of a non-official committee to enquire into the Government excesses during 1921-22 in Assam. He criticised the Government on the ground that it committed the excesses while the non-cooperators were actually engaged in social welfare measures like temperance reform, settlement of disputes by arbitration and encouragement of spinning and weaving.62

In the meantime the move to begin the civil disobedience movement was initiated at Bardoli. Gandhi firmly told the Government that he would shortly launch the mass C.D. Movement at Bardoli. But his proposed start of the movement was cancelled due to the Chouri Choura incident.

On 5 February 1922, there occurred a clash at Chouri Choura, between the armed police and a group of processionists. The police opened fire and when their ammunitions were exhausted the angry people went back to the nearby police station and set it on fire. Twentytwo constables were burnt alive in the fire.

Gandhiji was extremely shocked by this incident and on 11 February 1922 he took a decision to cancel active civil disobedience after consultation with the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi then decided to go on fast for 5 days from 12 February and asked the people to devote more vigorously only on constructive works and propagation of temperance reform and educational activities.63
The Bardoli decision caused confusion and displeasure among a section of Congress leaders. Leaders like Matilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai being puzzled and dismayed questioned the cancellation of C.D. programme.

In Assam also this decision of Gandhi did not go unprotested. Chandranath Sarma, who was ailing at that time, was shocked and hurt at the decision of the withdrawal taken by Gandhi. He said that Gandhi was suffering from 'religious mania' but the Congress was not a religious association. He criticised Gandhi’s doctrine that Swaraj would be attained "by all religious and spiritual means" and said that such a method would take thirty three crore of years for thirtythree crores of Indians to attain Swaraj. Chandranath Sarma wrote that the Bardoli decision brought down disgrace on the nation. The enthusiasm of the people of Assam also broke down with the announcement of the cancellation of the C.D. Movement.

Gandhiji's arrest on 10 March 1922 and subsequent imprisonment for 6 years, in fact, brought the first phase of the non-cooperation movement to an end.

Due to the dissatisfaction among the Congress leaders for cancellation of the C.D. programme and keeping in mind its effectiveness, in June 1922 the AICC constituted the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee with Matilal Nehru as Chairman and six other members to evaluate the effectiveness of civil
disobedience and its adaptability in the future phases of the movement. The C.D.E. Committee came to Assam and reached Gauhati on 7 August 1922. The Committee after examining several witnesses, found that Assam's situation was not favourable for mass civil disobedience due to the repressive measures adopted by the Government particularly in the Brahmaputra valley. However, the Committee advised the people of Assam to work more vigorously for the success of the Constructive Programmes. The Committee was very much impressed by the degree of devotion of the young workers of Assam to the cause of the movement. One of the Committee members, Rajagopalachari said that the young workers of Assam were the 'bravest and trusted followers of Gandhi'. He expressed the hope "If India had such youth of courage and faith, serving the cause in all her provinces, there would be no doubt of the early attainment of such goal." After taking witnesses throughout the country the Committee concluded that the time was not yet ripe for launching the C.D. movement.

The non-cooperation movement though suspended could not be regarded as a lost battle. It might not have brought independence to India within the stipulated period but it was successful in rousing the whole country against the British.
Women of Assam in the 1921-22 Non-cooperation.

Women throughout India responded to Gandhiji's call for non-cooperation. They participated in the movement by way of joining processions, attending meetings, taking up spinning and weaving, propagating the use of Khadi and Charkha, boycotting foreign goods and leaving schools and colleges by the girl students. By and large their participation was through the various women organizations at different levels or through the Congress Committees. They concentrated on propaganda and constructive works.

Kasturba Gandhi (Gujrat), Basanti Devi (Bengal), Urmila Devi (Bengal), Parbati Devi (Agra), Bai Amman (Lahore), Sarojini Naidu (Bombay), Una Nehru (U.P.) Sarala Devi (Punjab), Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya (Bengal) were some of the important organizers of the non-cooperation movement at the national level.

Kasturba Gandhi, who had her first lesson in Satyagraha in South Africa appealed to the women to spin and weave Khadi. She undertook extensive tours for propagating Khadi amongst the women in different parts of India. Parbati Devi was arrested and imprisoned for two years for delivering inflammatory speeches at Leerut. Bai Amman (Abadi Bano Begum) the mother of the Ali brothers (Id. Ali and Shaukat Ali) worked for Khadi and Hindu-
Sarojini Naidu, one of the closest associates of Mahatma Gandhi, worked primarily for Hindu-Muslim unity during the 1921-22 period. In 1922 when Gandhiji was arrested, he entrusted Sarojini Naidu with the responsibility of carrying on the programme.

The women of Bengal organized a women wing of the B.P.C.C. known as the Mahila Karma Samaj in 1921 for the purpose of women's participation in the non-cooperation programmes. The members of the Samaj organized women meetings, propagated the use of Khadi and undertook programmes for boycott of foreign goods and enrolment of volunteers. Some of them including Basanti Devi, wife of C.R. Das, courted arrest while participating in the movement.

These are only a few examples of women's participation in the movement of 1921-22 in different parts of India. But there were thousands of them who could not participate in the organizational work or join the processions and meetings due mainly to social restrictions. Nevertheless, they stood behind the mass movement and encouraged their male counterparts to join the movement.

In the case of the women of Assam the organizational activities begun before the commencement of the non-cooperation programmes. But the prevalence of conservatism stood in the way of their large scale participation in the
movement. However, the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of the leaders and workers of the Congress, though small in number, came out to participate in the 1921-22 movement ignoring the social restrictions. In January 1921, a group of women of Gauhati proposed to take out processions to violate Sec. 144 and court arrest as part of the movement's programme. The initiative was taken by Bidyutprova Devi, wife of Tarun Ram Phukan. But when Gandhiji came to know about it he asked them not to undertake such programmes at that time, rather he advised them to devote to organizational activity.

At Gauhati Bidyutprova Devi, Girija Devi (sister of Tarun Ram Phukan), Hemanta Kumari Devi, Dharmada Devi and Malinibala Devi (wife, sister and daughter of Kabin Chandra Bordoloi respectively), Snehalata Bhattacharyya, Ganeswari Devi, came out with their unnamed associates and enrolled themselves as Congress volunteers. They organized meetings to educate the people, particularly the rural women, about non-cooperation movement and the importance of spinning and weaving, boycotting of foreign goods and abstinence from opium eating and smoking as a part of the non-cooperation programme.

The women workers in many cases had to work in adverse situations. In the early part of the non-cooperation movement the terms like 'Swaraj' or 'Swadhinata'
(freedom) bore no meaning for the illiterate and innocent rural masses. Many in the rural areas could not think of any alternative to the British Raj. In some of the villages, people became violent when the Congress workers entered there to propagate the message of the Congress. Once in 1921, when Hemanta Kumari Devi accompanied by a few other women entered a village in the Dibrugarh district, the villagers with stuff in their hands chased the women workers out of the village. On another occasion Rajabala Das of Dibrugarh and her companions faced a similar situation with grave risk to their lives when they were trying to persuade some village women of Jengakhat village in Dibrugarh sub-division to become Congress volunteers. The party of women workers was surrounded by angry villagers with weapons and asked them to leave the place immediately before being cut into pieces.2

Gandhiji's visit to Assam in 1921 August provided great encouragement to the women of Assam. On 18.8.21, the day of Gandhi's arrival at Gauhati, a big meeting was held in the compound of Tarun Ram Phukan's residence which continued till 9 p.m. A large number of women of the town and the nearby areas attended the meeting to listen Gandhiji. In the bonfire of foreign cloth ceremonially performed after the meeting, a large number of women also participated. They did not hesitate to throw their shawls and saris to the 'Srntramedh Yagyna' i.e., (foreign cloth burning sacrifice) in response to the call given by Gandhi.
Felicitations were also offered to Gandhiji by the women of Gauhati after the meeting.  

On 19 August, Gandhi attended three women's meetings of the Assamese, Marwari and Bengali women. The meeting of the Assamese women was held in the Kamrup Theatre Hall. The women attending the meeting were all clad in pure white Khadi. Gandhiji was given a warm reception by the women. An elderly lady, Ghannkanti Phukanani and few other women presented Gandhi with Khaddar 'Chaddar' woven with their own hand-spun yarn. Gandhiji was so much impressed with their Khadi work that he expressed the hope that Assamese women alone could supply a considerable portion of the Khadi cloth needed by the whole of India.  

The meeting held for the Bengali women was also attended by many Assamese women. The Bengali women also wore Khadi. But the Marwari women attending their meeting failed to wear Khadi for which they apologised to Gandhi and promised to switch over to Khadi in the immediate future. In all the meetings Gandhiji laid stress on spinning and weaving and the use of Khadi by women.  

Begum *M. Ali who accompanied Gandhi to Assam also addressed few women's meetings organized in public places as well as in private residences.  

The impetus provided by Gandhi's visit found its expression in the activities of the women workers in the subsequent period of the non-cooperation movement. The
women volunteers went about on foot carrying the message of
the Congress and asked people to stop using and selling
foreign clothes. A group of women of Gauhati, under the
leadership of Hemanta Kumari Devi, Ganeswari Devi and Nalinibala Devi engaged themselves in popularizing spinning and
weaving. For that purpose they opened a spinning school at
Gauhati. The women spinners of the school were constantly
followed by the Government spies. But they ignored them and
went on working fearlessly for the popularization of spinning
and weaving.

The women of Gauhati showed great zeal in spinning
and weaving. A few days before Gandhi's visit to Assam,
the Congress reception committee decided that all workers
of Congress would wear Khadi clothes during the whole period
of Gandhi's stay. To get the Kurtas and Gandhi caps stitch-
ed for a large number of workers in a short notice posed as
a problem. But the women took up the challenge and they
hand stitched these items before Gandhi's arrival. The
women members of Nabin Bordoloi's family alone stitched
500 caps for the workers.

On 8 December 1921, a women's meeting was held at
Gauhati at the residence of Nilakanta Baruah, a retired
Government servant, at the initiative of the wives of
 Nilakanta Baruah and Bipin Bihari Bora. About 100 women
attended the meeting. The meeting was addressed by Srimati
Baruah, Durgaprova Bora and Kamala Kanta Bhaṭṭacharyya. The speakers in the meeting urged upon the women to take up the propagation of Charkha and Swadeshi. They also appealed to the general public to take up Swadeshi wholeheartedly and boycott foreign clothes and yarns completely. The women were advised to discontinue the purdah system in any form. Twenty women had enrolled themselves as volunteers in that meeting. Within a few days after this meeting the Government withheld the payment of pension to Nilakanta Barua for allowing his wife and other family members to participate in the non-cooperation movement. But that could not dishearten them in any way.

The response of the women towards the collection of money for the Jilak Swaraj Fund was also remarkable. Women of Gauhati donated generously to the fund. Instances of parting with diamond rings to the fund were also reported. In other places also, for example at Sibsagar, Nihunjalata Chaliha, Bhubaneswari Devi, Kamalkali Barua, Nanibala Chaliha, Labanyalata Chaliha, Kankanbala Sahanta, Thaneswari Barua, Mohini Baru and many others donated all their ornaments to this fund. The fund collection, naturally enough, was concentrated in the urban areas.

In order to help the Congress workers, the residences of Congress leaders and workers were converted into volunteer camps and the elderly ladies of the families took the charge of maintaining them. At Gauhati Bidyutprova Devi
and Girija Devi conducted such volunteer camps at their residence.95

The influence of the non-cooperation movement penetrated deep into the minds of the women of Assam. Even the prostitutes of Gauhati were moved by this call and quite a few among them reportedly gave up their profession and took to spinning and weaving as their livelihood.96

Gandhi’s visit gave a great impetus to the rural women as well. Guneswari Nazumdar, wife of Harendra Mohan Nazumdar took the leadership to organize the women of Barnagar area. In 1921, a large meeting was organized at the initiative of Guneswari at Kaniabhattha village near Barnagar which was addressed by Bishnuram Medhi and other leaders. After the meeting a huge quantity of foreign clothes were burnt there. On the same day the Barnagar Mahila Congress was formed with Guneswari Nazumdar as the President. She worked hard for popularizing Khadi and spinning and weaving, in association with some other local women. She sent a bundle of self-woven Khadi clothes to the Gaya Congress held in 1923 for distribution among the poor people.97

Bhanumati Talukdar wife of Mangalu Talukdar was another active women worker from Godebori, an interior village near Palashbari in Kamrup District. She enrolled herself as a Congress worker in 1921 and to work earnestly
for the Congress, she left her family with husband and 3 children. She used to wear a Khadi cap like the male volunteers and carried a Congress flag on a small bamboo pole. People of the locality called her Volunteer Bai. The Mahatma called her as the 'Sarojini of Assam'. When Gandhi came to Assam she accompanied him to many places. She visited most of the places of Assam for organizational works and attended most of the Congress meetings held in different places of the province. For popularization of Khadi and hand-spun yarn she made house to house propaganda alone. In some cases she even cut the mill spun yarns fitted for weaving in the looms.

In the first phase of the movement in 1921-22, a large number of leaders were arrested. The women during this period showed great solidarity with men and the latter found ample encouragement from the women. After Tarun Ram Phukan and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi were released from Jail on 2 December 1922, a large meeting was held at Gauhati in which the Mahila Samiti of Gauhati felicitated them by presenting 'Abhinandan Patras' (congratulatory papers). The leading women speakers at the meeting were Sashibala Changkakati, Padmavati Devi Phukanani, Chandraprova Saikiani and Snehalata Dhattcharaya. A similar meeting was held at Sipajhar to felicitate these leaders in which about 800 women took part and the women took the initiative to offer felicitations to them.
The arrest of leaders could not dishearten or discourage the women. On occasions it was seen that mothers, wives, daughters or sisters of arrested non-cooperators were emboldened by such arrests to come forward to the front of the movement ignoring the social restrictions. For example, after the arrest of Krishna Kanta Baruah of Gauhati in 1921, his widowed mother came out of the house 'throwing away her chest long veil' and appealed to other women saying "all the leaders had gone to jail - our veils have no use now. We women should come out now to fill the places of our leaders". From that day onward she started working for the Congress with great devotion particularly in the rural areas.101

The widespread feeling was that if situation so demanded, women should fill the places of the male leaders. In a public meeting held in the premises of Tarun Ram Phukan's residence on 19 December 1921, attended by men and women alike, one of the speakers Suresh Chandra Bhattacharyya said that no sooner the youth were imprisoned the old men would come forward and take their place and in their absence the women would come to the front. The meeting also expressed its happiness that already a large number of women had enrolled themselves as Congress members in Assam and more and more of them were coming forward.102
In the district of Darrang, a few devoted women workers like Chandra Prova Saikiani, Kironmayee Agarwalla, Kironbala Barkakati, Sarala Das and others provided the leadership in organizing the women of the district very effectively during the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22. Chandra Prova Saikiani was a teacher in a primary school in an interior village near Tezpur. She became closely associated with the Tezpur Mahila Samiti which was formed in 1919 at the initiative of Kironmayee Agarwalla. Chandra Prova also participated in the Tezpur session of the Asom Chatra Sammilan (1918) and the Barpeta session of Asom Sahitya Sabha (1919). During 1921-22 movement she gave up her service in response to the boycott call.

Kironmayee Agarwala was the wife of Paramananda Agarwala a renowned tea planter of Tezpur. She sacrificed her comforts to a great extent for the cause of the women and the non-cooperation movement. One of the rooms of her house was used as the office of the Tezpur Mahila Samiti for a long time from 1919. In 1921, she established a Congress Volunteer camp in another room of her house and took charge of its management. When the volunteers were arrested in 1921, she even supplied food and clothes to them in jails. She felt proud when her son Jyotiprasad Agarwalla was
arrested and imprisoned.\textsuperscript{104}

Kiranbala Barkakati (wife of Brahmananda Barkakati) and Sarala Das (mother of Omeo Kumar Das) conducted another camp at the residence of Brahmananda Barkakati, and they bore the expenses of the camp out of their own resources.\textsuperscript{105} This zeal to help the Congress volunteers was seen among the rural women also. Women in the interior villages gave shelter to Congress volunteers who were completely unknown to them and even at the risk of being found out by police.\textsuperscript{106}

In Darrang, the programmes of the non-cooperation and the name of Gandhi had exercised great influence among all sections of the people. People closely associated with the European tea planters also came under its spell. A few concubines of some European planters of Darrang district donated funds generously in the name of 'Gandhi Baba'.\textsuperscript{107} One such concubine of an European tea planter was a tea labour girl named Mongri, alias Malati Hem of Lalmati tea estate of Darrang district. She was a habitual drunkard and an irascible woman. When Omeo Kumar Das and others were picketing before the liquor shops of that area in April 1921, they were able to convince her to give up drinking as a part of the non-cooperation movement.\textsuperscript{108}

Later, Mongri herself took up the propaganda against drinking. She also helped the Congress volunteers in
organization work. But after a few days, in the year 1921, she was killed by some Government supporters for helping the Congress volunteers. Mongri, alias Malati Mem, was incidentally the first women to be killed for participation in the programmes of the non-cooperation movement in Assam. She deserves her rightful place in the list of martyrs of Assam and India as well. 109

The women of Sootia in Darrang district launched the temperance movement by a method of their own. They made a rule that those people who did not give up opium and other intoxicants would be socially boycotted. This tactic of indirect pressure proved in many cases very effective. 110

A few other important women of this district working in the 1921-22 movement were Moladai Hazarika of Sootia, Rebati Bora of Janugurihat and Nirmalprova Saikia of Kachari village. They undertook in their respective areas the work of educating the people about non-cooperation and popularisation of Khadi and spinning and weaving. 111 Ashradha Bhakatani, an old religious lady of Mongoldoi in Darrang district was another devoted worker of the Congress. She used to dress like Congress volunteers and carried on propaganda work of the non-cooperation movement and the importance of spinning and weaving through her self-
composed songs sung by herself amongst the village women. She also used to sing before the start of the meetings in order to attract a greater number of people to the meetings.\textsuperscript{112}

Gandhiji visited Tezpur on 21 August 1921. He was scheduled to address one public meeting only but he expressed the desire to have a separate meeting of women also. Accordingly, a women meeting was convened at Bengali Theatre Hall at 2.30 p.m. on the same day in which a large number of women assembled to listen to Gandhi. In this meeting Gandhi appreciated the skills of the women weavers of Assam and asked the women to devote more for spinning and weaving and popularization of Khadi. He also expressed his regret for not being aware so far about the richness of Assamese culture.\textsuperscript{113}

Gandhiji's visit to the district of Darrang left deep impressions in the minds of the rural women also. On 4 October 1921, a women's meeting was held at Gorahabi, an interior village in the district. The meeting was attended by some important Congress workers who were dressed in knee-length Dhoti and sleeveless khadi shirts. The village women were surprised to see the leaders in such a dress. When they told the audience that Gandhi had also started wearing this kind of dress without any shirt for the purpose of making people realize the importance of
spinning and weaving, the women became agitated and moved. The women present in the meeting promised then and there that they would spin and weave but they asked the leaders to request Gandhi to war shirts and other necessary garments. This was the extent of love and respect for Gandhi and their devotion to the non-cooperation movement that the women of interior villages had.

Ratneswari Bhattacharyya and Khagendripriya Barua did lot of organizational work for the Congress in Nowgong district. The Nowgong Mahila Samiti formed in 1917 provided the platform for the women of the district to carry on the works of the non-cooperation movement. A women's meeting was held on 1 May 1921 at Nowgong (Nagaon) to discuss women's participation in the non-cooperation movement. This meeting was addressed by Kuladhar Chaliha, Pandit Kanak Chandra Sarma and Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya. The speakers dwelt upon the usefulness of Khadi and spinning and weaving and the necessity of abstinence from opium and other intoxicants as a part of the movement. Only about 25 elderly women including widows attended the meeting. Girls and young women could not come to the meeting for fear of criticism from the conservative section of the society.
Gandhi arrived at Nowgong on 23 August 1921 and addressed a public meeting on the same day. A huge crowd gathered in the meeting. But the attendance of women was extremely poor. So a separate women meeting was organized at Nowgong Natya-andir (Nowgong Dramatic Club) and was addressed by Begum Md. Ali. The Begum appealed to the women to work for the non-cooperation movement and explained the importance of spinning and weaving. The women present in the meeting donated their valuable ornaments to the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

Opium consumption was a noticeable evil in the Nowgong (Nagaon) district, and, therefore, campaign against opium was one of the major programmes in the 1921-22 period. After Gandhi's visit this movement was intensified. The women of the villages also took part in picketing before opium shops and prevented the opium eaters from purchasing opium. Rongdoi Lalungani of Jagi Bhakat Gaon of Nowgong district, a Plains tribe woman, had a direct confrontation with the police while trying, with a few other Congress workers, to take away the opium from an opium eater of the village in 1922. Seven volunteers were arrested in this connection, although Rongdoi was not arrested. Provawati Devi of Puranigudam was another important anti-opium worker from Nowgong district.
In Lakhimpur district the number of women participants in the 1921 movement was not very significant. Only a few elderly women participated in processions and meetings. More active among them were Khirada Phukan and Khireswari Dastidarani of Falan village. Besides helping the Congress volunteers, they undertook propaganda work among the village women. Ratneswari Phookanani, another important worker of Lakhimpur, courted arrest in 1921 for taking part in the non-cooperation programme.

The participation of women of the then Sibsagar district in the 1921-22 non-cooperation was remarkable. In Sibsagar subdivision, Sundari Kakati, Lilawati Kakati, Bhadreswari Gogoi, Sasiprova Datta and Tileswari Devi took the initiative in organizing the women of the urban and rural areas for participation in the movement. Annada Devi Borkotoky, Hemalata Bezbor, Sasiprova Chaliha, Mirmola Devi, Aikan Bhuyan, Mukheswari Devi, Tankaeswari Bhattacharyya, Basanti Malia Barua, Aikan Bhattacharyya, Senchi Bhuyan, Saduri Bora, Aseni Bora, Golapi Bora, Golapi Datta, Mohini Devi, Tulas Devi, Padmeswari Devi, Sasiprova Datta, Gunada Khaund, Aidew Rajkhowa and Premoda Devi were some of the important workers of Jorhat sub-division. These women workers mostly engaged in educating the rural women about the
non-cooperation movement and popularization of weaving and spinning. Hukheswari Devi and Annada Devi Borkotoky of Jorhat went from house to house in villages to ask women to take to spinning and weaving. At Daligaon, a village near Jorhat, they opened a spinning and weaving centre for women. Women in large numbers participated in picketing and processions. Sasiprova Datta was assaulted by police when she was participating in a procession at Sibsagar town. She received an injury on her head and hands.

In 1921-22, the initiative to organize the women of Golaghat sub-division was taken by Swarnalata Barua with the help of Danikana Datta, Labanyalata Baruah, Dwariki Dasi, Kanakeswari Hazarika, Madhabi Sonowal and few others. Pramila Medak (Kanan) was an important women organizer among the Mishings of Golaghat. She came out to join the non-cooperation movement defying the social restriction for which she was excommunicated from the Mishings. Debeswari Hazarika of Dergaon was arrested and imprisoned for several times in 1921-22.

Memoprova Das, mother of Jinalprova Das of Gauhati, took up organizational works among the women in Dibrugarh and in the neighbouring villages. She was a devoted worker in spinning and weaving and a participant in the
boycott of foreign goods in 1921-22. She was the head-mistress of the Dibrugarh Girls' School and she participated in the movement while continuing in service. Rajabala Das, Suprabha Datta, Joytore Gogoi and Nagendra Hazarika were other active non-cooperation workers. In 1921, Rajabala Das was doing her B.A. in Calcutta. In that year the Mahatma came to Calcutta and addressed a women's meeting at the residence of C.R. Das. Rajabala attended this meeting and she decided after listening to Gandhi to give up her studies and join the movement. When Gandhiji came to Dibrugarh in August 1921, Rajabala Das along with her mother met him personally and told him that she was joining the movement by giving up her studies which Gandhiji appreciated. Rajabala Das became the Secretary of the women's wing of the Dibrugarh District Congress Committee formed soon after Gandhi's visit in 1921. She undertook the work of publicity and propaganda of spinning and weaving mainly in the rural areas. Rajabala was accompanied, in her extensive tours of the villages, by her aunt, Sashiprova Datta and a few other women of Dibrugarh. For the purpose of popularization of spinning and weaving they opened training centres in Dibrugarh and other places.

The visit of modern Lohan Lalavya and Rajendra Prasad in 1922 further encouraged the women of Assam to
devote more effectively to the cause of the national movement. Malavyaji and Rajendra Prasad came to Gauhati in May 1922 to make an on-the-spot enquiry about the police atrocities perpetrated on the people of Assam during 1921-22. On 30 May 1922 a women meeting was held in the premises of Jarun Ram Phukan's residence. Speaking in the meeting Malavya asked the women of Assam to devote their time and energy for the advancement of home-made cloth industry and popularisation of Khadi.

After staying for two days at Gauhati they left for keeping their tour programme in different places of Assam. Malavya arrived at Despur on 31 May. A large crowd including women received Malavya at Biswanath ghat at Despur. He addressed a women's meeting on the same day at the Bengalee Theatre Hall at Despur. This meeting was attended by women belong to different castes and creeds. Pandit Hukunda Charan Samadhya and Mahendra Phukan also accompanied Malavya and they also spoke in the meeting. All the three speakers emphasised the importance of spinning and weaving. They said that Swaraj could easily be achieved with the help of Charkha and by boycotting of foreign goods in their totality. Comparing the Charkha with a machine gun, Pandit Samadhya said that 'even Manchester can be blown up' with it.
Maiavya came back to Gauhati on the next day en-route to Jorhat. At Pandu riverport a big crowd composed mostly of the men and women of the neighbouring villages received Maiavya. The women were singing songs composed by themselves about non-cooperation, Congress and Gandhi. When Maiavyaji was told the meaning and the spirit of the songs he was very much moved and impressed. Later, in Gujrat, Maiavya, referring to this spirit of Assamese women said that the nationalist feeling was so deep in the hearts of the people that no bureaucracy, however strong, could stop this movement in Assam. The women of Assam, he said, expressed the glory of Mahatma through their spontaneous and self-composed songs.¹³²

Maiavya arrived at Jorhat on 2 June, 1922. On that day local women met him in the Town Theatre Hall and discussed with him their duties in the prevailing situation. Maiavya advised them to lay more emphasis on constructive programmes and to form Nari Handalees (women associations) to carry on the movement in an organized manner.¹³³

At Sibsagar, a fairly big women meeting was held in front of the Town Club on 3 June 1922 to listen to Pandit Maiavya. While welcoming Maiavya in the meeting the women presented him with many garlands made of hand-spun thread skiens which received great appreciation
from him. In his speech Malavya advised the women not to regard themselves as weaker than men and appealed to them to devote more time in constructive work and thereby contribute to the movement. Two of the women, viz., Kamalalaya Kakati and Srimati Chattopadhyaya also spoke in the meeting.  

Accompanied by Pandit Samadhyaya, Omeo Kumar Das, Devendra Nath Phukan, Mohendranath Phukan and others, Malavya arrived at Dibrugarh on 4 June 1922. Besides addressing a public meeting he also attended a Mahila Sabha (women's meeting) held at the residence of Prasanna Kumar Baruah. He spoke about Swadeshi and Khilafat and appealed to the people to become Congress members and to donate generously to the Tilak Swaraj Fund and to protest against any injustice by the Government. 

In the 1921-22 non-cooperation movement, the major thrust of the women in Assam was in the field of promotion of spinning and weaving. It was known that women of Assam irrespective of class, caste and status used to weave for themselves and for their family members. Weaving was a part of a women's day-to-day activity. Thus, spinning and weaving of Khadi as a part of the non-cooperation movement drew a large number of Assamese women to it. In respect of spinning and weaving, perhaps
the women of Assam occupied the top most position in terms of number of participants throughout India. Because of large scale production of Khadi and hand-spun yarn, the boycott of foreign clothes also became easier. That way, it was an important contribution of the women in respect of boycott of foreign goods.

Till the middle of the 19th century, every yard of yarn used in the household looms of Assam was hand spun yarn of indigenous production and the cloth obtained was in no way inferior to the best quality cotton available in the markets. But from the last part of the 19th century women weavers gave up spinning and started to use mill spun Manchester yarns supplied by the Government. It was true that they got fine mill yarns at cheaper rates and these were readily available. But even then had they tried to spin themselves they would not have got any good quality cotton for that. In the four districts of the Brahmaputra valley, viz., Goalpara, Kamrup, Howgong and Sibsagar the annual production of high quality raw cotton was 35000 maunds in the 1920s. But the entire production was exported away and in its place low quality cotton at higher rate was made available for purchase by the local spinners and weavers.
From the time of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905, the weavers of Assam gradually felt that they should spin for themselves. Then the non-cooperation movement brought the message to the people of Assam to revive their lost culture. Since 1921 the province had made a remarkable progress in spinning and weaving. Jamnadas Kushalchand who had visited Assam in 1922 wrote "I met about 60 girls of different classes in society, their ages varying from 7 to 12 years, at different places during my tour and I found that they all knew spinning. Their fingers were trained and nimble; the yarn they spun was fairly even. Owing to weaving still maintaining its old position in Assam, almost every household possesses a Charkha for reeling purpose. The rapidity with which the people are taking to spinning is highly satisfactory".

Commenting on the prospect of handloom industry in Assam Kushalchand said - "The condition of the cottage handloom industry is ideal. Its position in the Assamese society has remained up to this day unimpaired. The loom is the simplest of all types I have ever seen .......... Every home has at least one loom, more often two or three. The women of Assam are expert in weaving artistic patterns. Every woman spends most of her leisure hours in weaving and produce easily cloth sufficient for family requirements. Mahatma Gandhi also observed that the women of
Assam had expert knowledge in weaving. While he regretted that women of Assam had given up spinning and taking to weave foreign yarn, he expressed the hope "Assam will rise to its full height in the matter of Swadeshi". He said, "Assam, if its workers do their duty, can play a most important part in developing Swadeshi. Its women can weave much more than enough for themselves".  

With the beginning of the non-cooperation movement the women of Assam took it as a challenge to revive spinning and weaving and also to popularise the hand-spun yarn and loom woven clothes in place of foreign clothes. The wives of Assamese Government officers persuaded their husbands to wear Endi suits in place of foreign clothes. By the end of 1922, the women of the Brahmaputra valley districts had not only boycotted foreign clothes, they had also discarded all mill yarn.

The campaign against opium and other intoxicants was one of the important items of the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22. Gandhiji also asked the Assam leaders to give more importance to this problem. But it was a difficult task, since the Congress workers had to face resistance both from the Government and the consumers. All repressive measures were taken to stop this campaign since opium was a major source of revenue in the Brahmaputra valley.
In this anti-opium programme the women of Assam played a significant role. In this campaign the women used the tactics of picketing before the opium and liquor shops, persuading opium eaters to give it up. Sometimes they did not hesitate to resort to social boycott of the offenders. Besides picketing, the women also took to persuading the opium eaters to give up their evil habit. An example may be cited. Aikan Bhuyan of Teok was given in marriage to Bholanath Bhuyan who was working in opium shop at Sadiya at a salary of Rs. 120. But soon after her marriage she persuaded her husband to disassociate himself from the opium shop and take a job elsewhere. Accordingly, he joined a job at Thengalbari T.E. near Jorhat at a salary of Rs. 40 due to her persuasion. Both the husband and the wife took the mission to persuade the tea garden labourers to desist from taking opium and other intoxicants. They succeeded in convincing about 100 labourers to give up opium eating and drinking. In some places women while picketing before the opium shops tactfully managed to take away the licences of the opium eaters and burnt them.

It was true that social conservatism stood in the way of participation of a larger number of women in the organizational work or in direct participation in the movement. But in whatever number they participated, the movement was provided with a great force by women's
participation. The male Congress volunteers in many place while working in the villages had to face resistance by the villagers but with the presence of women with them the opposition was lessened.146 Young girls inspired by the participation of their seniors joined the 'Eanar Sena' group to help in the constructive work programmes. Pushpalata Das enrolled herself as Eanar Sena in 1921.147

The Government of Assam adopted various repressive measures to frustrate the non-cooperators. As in other provinces of India, the interference by the Government with the work of the movement commenced with the arrest and imprisonment of leaders. Collective punitive fines were realised from the villagers on the slightest pretext. Assaults and tortures were freely resorted to in various forms by the Government personnels in villages and towns. Punitive fines were realized by the Government by use of force. Even the person of women was not safe. Sir. Calvert, a police officer, admitted in a cross examination that to make the search of a man complete, he had the body of the man's wife also searched.148

Gunswari Hazumdar, the wife of Handa Hazumdar of Sorbhog, was subjected to torture by police in a very derogatory manner in 1921. When the police entered her house in search of her husband the police not only intruded into their privacy, they also used abusive words against
her. The police went to the extent of searching her body to find out any secret papers that might be hidden. Her hair bun was opened and her dress loosened for the search, in a very humiliating manner.\textsuperscript{149}

In order to realize the punitive fines payable by their relatives women's ornaments, their dearest possessions, were attached and sold out. But worse than these attachments, realization of fine had afforded a most convenient pretext for the police to enter the private residences by which every disrespect was shown to the sanctity and purity of Hindu kitchen and the dignity of the women.\textsuperscript{150}

Thus women had to suffer a lot during the 1921-22 non-cooperation movement. Those who could not participate directly in the movement compensated for it in other ways. When male members of the house were either arrested or were away in doing organizational work or picketing, the responsibility of running the household matters fell on the women. At times, with large number of the earning members of the family away, the women had to manage everything with great difficulty and this they did with courage, determination and pleasure.\textsuperscript{151}
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143. Das, O.K., Jivan Smriti, pp. 102-106.
144. Personal statement of Aikan Bhuyan.
145. Personal statement of Kiranbala Bora of Nowgong; also see Das, O.K., Jivan Smriti, p. 102.
146. Personal statement of Rabin Kakati (Ex-M.P.)
147. Personal statement of Puspalata Das.
148. Young India, 17 August 1922.
149. Ramdhenu, 13th Year, 2nd Issue (Majumdar, N., Sei Dinbor Monot Pore)
150. Young India, 17 August 1922.
151. Personal statement of Debeswar Sarma.