



ROLE OF INDIAN WOMEN IN FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA

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Abstract

The entire history of the freedom group is full of stories of bravery, leaving behind the political intelligence of hundreds and thousands of women in our country. The participation of women in India's freedom struggle began in early 1817. Their participation in the conflict began in early 1817, when Bhim Bai Holkar fought the agitators against British Colonel Malcolm and defeated them in a guerrilla war. At a very important time for our motherland, when the British East India Company was rapidly expanding its empire in India, when Tipu Sultan was destroyed (1799), the arrogant Marathas were humiliated (1815), Rani Chennamma, Widow of Raja Malla, present-day Karnataka. Sarja, a small principality in Belgaum district, was disheartened by the British intrigues. When women joined politics after the Indian National Congress (Annie Besant started Home Rule League) and especially during the Swadeshi movement, it was Gandhiji who initiated the widespread participation of women in the freedom struggle.

Keywords: - Freedom, Movement, Women Participation, Revolt.

Introduction

The contribution of women in the freedom movement was significant. He was involved in various nationalist activities inside and outside the house. Inside the house, she weaved Khadi, held classes to educate other women, and made explicit contributions to nationalist literature in the form of articles, poems and promotional materials. Shelter and nursing care were also given to nationalist leaders hiding from British authorities. A morning ferry was organized outside the house in which women of all castes and classes sang songs in the local temple to enhance the nationalism and patriotism of the people. He also organized rallies and demonstrations, participated in Satyagraha, set up a toddy and foreign clothing shop, went to jail and was brutally beaten by British police. Finally, when the nationalist leadership was on target, women



played a leadership role and provided guidance to the movement. There was not a single movement in the Indian uprising, it was a lot. This brings to our attention what CA Bayly Eric Stokes wrote in his book: *The Pageant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857*. During the first century of British rule, there were a series of uprisings which **Kathleen Gough** has called “**restorative revolts**” Was started by dispersing the displaced local rulers, Mughal officials or landlords. The century before 1857 saw more than 40 major revolts, including hundreds of smaller revolts. However, these were local in character and influence and differed from each other because the purpose of each revolt was different. Fakir The Fakir and the Saints Revolt, Bengal and Bihar (1770–1820): They were rebels and included about 50,000 participants at the height of the revolt. Raja Chait Singh's Revolt, Awadh (1778–81): The primary goal was to restore existing agricultural relations and continued to do so until 1830. Poligar Revolt, Andhra Pradesh (1799–1805): Polygamy (feudal rulers appointed as military chiefs) joined against the company's strategy and the revolt reached a large scale before the revolt. I Paika Revolt, Odisha (1817): Armed revolt against company rule led by Bakshi Jagabandhu. I Farazi Movement, East Bengal (1838–1848): The first no-tax campaign led by Shariatullah Khan and Dadu Mian. It was endemic in nature and continued to return until 1870.

Tribal Revolution (Revolt)

1. Bhil revolution (**Revolt**), Khandesh (present day Maharashtra & Gujarat), (1818-31): Bhils rebelled against the British occupation of Khandesh but were crushed in 1819 but the situation remained unsettled till 1831.
2. U Kol revolution (**Revolt**), Chhota Nagpur & Singhbhum region, Bihar & Orissa (1831-32): Plunder and Arson were the chief mode with negligible killings but had a major impact in the region.
3. Hal Santhal revolution (**Revolt**), Eastern India (1855-56): The most effective tribal movement which spread rapidly covering areas of Bihar, Orissa and Bengal against British infiltrating policies.



Role played by women in freedom struggle:

The part of women in the freedom movement was important. He was concerned in different nationalist performance indoor and external the house

Before Gandhi phase:

1. Bhima Bai Holkar fight bravely against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him in guerrilla warfare.
2. Maharani Velu Nachiyar (1730 – 1796) bravely fights with the British army decades before the 1857 Revolt. She probably remains the only queen to have defeated the British army successfully.
3. Gauri Parvati Bai who was queen of Travancore carried out reform and emphasized on the need for tutoring of girls thus in many ways helping women elevate from social and educational stigma.
4. The role of Rani of Ramgarh, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tapasvini Maharani in the War of Independence (the Great Revolt) of 1857 was commendable.
5. During Swadeshi movement their activities were limited to boycott of foreign cloth and picketing of liquor shops. A nationalistic cult around Bharat Mata (mother India) started to emerge which further necessitated the role of women.
6. In the second stage of women contribution, the idea of home rule and constitutionalism became dominant. Some western women played a significant role in this. Annie Besant, who became the first woman president of Indian National Congress, launched Home Rule movement.



During Gandhi phase:

1. **Role in Gandhi led mass movement:** Many women played a proactive role in Gandhi movements. Kasturba Gandhi imprisoned for participating in Quit India Movement and consequently died in Poona Jail. Vijaya laxmi Pandit actively participated in all civil disobedience (misconduct) movement (1932,1941) and got arrested. Similarly, Indira Gandhi organized ‘Monkey army’ of youths.
2. **Social and Women Mobilization:** Women played an important role in mobilization by leading from the front and through their writings. Prominent women like Aruna Asaf Ali were the leading figure of Quit India movement and edited journal ‘inquilab for mobilization. Similarly Raj Kumari Kaur was the founder of All India Women’s Conference.
3. **Revolutionary Movements:** Some Indian women also took revolutionary steps against imperial rule. Kalapana Datta was the prominent revolutionary leader and was part of Chittagong armory raid. Rani Gaidineliu led the Naga nationalist movement against British and known as ‘Queen of Naga’.
4. **Raising voice of freedom at International level:** Bhikaji Cama organized free India Society in UK and called as Mother India’s first cultural representative of USA. Vijay Laxmi Pandit raised Indian voice at San Francisco UN meeting. Sarojni Naidu participated in round table conference along with Gandhi and Nehru.
5. **As Indian National Congress leaders:** Anne Besant, Irish lady and Sarojini Naidu emerged as an important national leader who later became the President of INC.
6. **Women Organizations’:** In the third phase, women’s participation in Non Cooperation movement helped in incorporating women from all over India. Independent bodies of women such as Rashtriya Stree Sanghashwere fused with District Congress Committees. It also saw inclusion of women from all sections – Hindu/ Muslim, widows, scheduled/marginalized sections.



7. Through participation in various movements: During Civil Disobedience, women volunteers participated in marches boycotts and Prabhat Pheris. Desh Sevika Sangh, patriotic groups within their association, was formed for passive resistance. Sarojini Naidu, Muhtulaxmi Reddy, Margret Cousins were put in jail. Bi Amma, the mother of Ali brothers addressed 6000 women to join men in picketing. In Andhra Pradesh, a vibrant Durgabai collected over a thousand Devadasi to hear Gandhi's speech.

Women's Organizations

In the early, twentieth century many women's organization came into picture who were active in the public arena and also focused on women's political and legal rights.

- Rashtriya Stree Sangha or Dash Sevika Sangha was started as auxiliary body of Congress.
- 1910 Sarala Devi Chaudhurani „Bharat stree Mahanandala“ tried to spread education
- In 1917, in Madras women's Indian Association was started by enlightened European and Indian ladies – Margaret Cousins and Annie Besant.
- 1925, the National Council of Women in India was formed as a branch of the International council of Women Lady Mehribai Tata was an actives of this society.
- 1927, All India, Women Conference came into existence which championed for all sorts of women rights, from franchise to marriage reform and the rights of women laborers.
- In 1920 in Bengal, Bangiya Nari Samaj campaigned for women's voting rights.
- All Bengal Women union campaigned for legislation against trafficking of women.

Women organization appealed to both government and nationality for support. However government support was often a compromise. The nationalists on the other hand were more sympathetic for the Women question , since 1920, because they needed their participation in the nation-building project. Women too privileged these “pieces of universalization” by placing nationalism before Women issues. The Women fight for suffrage was granted in Government of India Act 1935 where the ratio of female voters was raised 1:5 and women also got reserved seats in legislative. Similarly, various social legislation and acts tried to improve gender parity.



For example: The Sarda Act. Of 1929 – which fixed the minimum age of marriage for females at 14 and male at eighteen, laws defining Women right to property, inheritance, divorce, to restrain dowry and control position. (Bandhopadhyay,2006:394)

1857 Uprising (Revolt)

However, the 1857 Revolt saw many stalwart women participants in the freedom struggle that have gone down as legends in the history of Indian Independence. Rani Lakshmi Bai dressed up as man and fought alongside her battalion bravely against the British army. Begum Hazrat Mahal refused to be bogged down by the Doctrine of Lapse and reclaimed Awadh from the British as well as reinstated her young son as king. However after the fall of Lucknow she had to flee to Nepal. Rani Avantibai Lodhi of Ramgarh, Rani Tace Bai, Rani Jindan Kaur, Jhalkaribai and Uda Devi are other historical women who fought with the British army during the revolt. Besides their strength and courage at battles with the British armies, notable Indian women also paved way for social change. Savitri Bai Phule, the first female teacher in a first women school also opened a school for the untouchables and worked tirelessly for women rights. Helping her was Tarabai Shinde known for her published work *Stri Purush Tulana* considered as one of the first modern Indian feminist perspectives.

Near the beginning 19th century

The early 19th century saw the struggle for independence in full swing and women of all races and classes took the initiative to be equally responsible and dedicated to the national cause. Noble men like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and Chandrasekhar Azad emerged as leaders in their own right, women stalwarts also took one step at a time with them. In fact, women freedom fighters have undoubtedly made significant contributions to the freedom movement and in many ways the coordinated coordination between the two has been an important milestone in the attainment of Indian independence.

Non-cooperation movement (1920)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and took up the demand for self-rule and non-cooperation movement. Sarla Devi, Muthulaxmi Reddy, Susheela Nair, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sucheta Kripalani and Aruna Asaf Ali are some of the



women who joined in the non-violent movement. Kasturba Gandhi, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi, and the women of the Nehru family, Kamla Nehru, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Swarup Rani, also involved in the National Movement. Lado Rani Zutshi and her daughters Manmohini, Shyama and Janak led the movement in Lahore.

Sarojini Naidu also fondly known as the Nightingale of India was a prolific writer and poet. She was president of the Indian National Congress and was an outstanding leader campaigning and leading from the front in the Civil Disobedience Movement and Salt Satyagraha.

Annie Besant was elected the president of the Indian National Congress and launched the Home Rule Movement. A reformer, labor organizer and strike leader, Annie Besant was also actively involved in educational activities setting up schools and colleges.

Madam Cama or Bhikaji Cama exiled in Europe was a social worker and a strong nationalist. She unfurled the flag of Indian Independence in Stuttgart Germany along with a powerful speech advocating the right to freedom.

Kamala Nehru was in the forefront of the Non – Corporation Movement and organized women in picketing shops selling foreign liquor and cloth. However, when her husband Jawahar Lal Nehru was arrested for delivering a speech deemed as ‘seditious’ by the British, she went in his place to deliver it.

Vijay Lakshmi Pandit the first women to become the president of the United Nations General Assembly was arrested multiple times for her involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Aruna Asaf Ali played a pivotal role in the Quit India Movement unfurling the flag in Bombay to signify the start of the movement. She edited ‘Inquilab’ a monthly journal of the Indian National Congress and was awarded the highest civilian award the Bharat Ratna.

Kalpana Dutta was influenced by the ideas of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and joined the Chittagong armory raids.

GUJRAT

The non-cooperation movement also became very popular among the women of Gujarat. In fact, the women associated with Gandhi's ashram played an important role in popularizing it



in many cities, towns and villages of Gujarat. Among the women of the ashram, Anusuyaben Sarabhai (sister of Ambalal Sarbhi, a prominent mill owner in Ahmedabad), who has been active in social service since 1914, played a key role in popularizing the creative program. The women, along with Kasturba, Ansuyaben and some other "Ashramist sisters", influenced the importance of spinning the wheel, wearing Khadi, boycotting government educational institutions, ending untouchability and promoting Hindu-Muslim unity. Also, under Gandhi's inspiration, many girls dropped out of government schools and colleges. There were Maniben Patel and Miss Desai, whose efforts were publicly praised by Gandhiji. In many of the women's meetings the women showed their generosity by donating jewelry and cash for a noble cause.

BENGAL

Women of Bengal joined the Non-Cooperation Movement through creative programs. Many of the girls at Diocesan's College gave up their studies and joined the movement in 1920 and heard Gandhiji's speech by Renuka Ray in Calcutta. Some of them donated their bracelets and jewellery to Gandhiji as they were watching him for national purpose. Then sold to Khadar, Not only this, she also organized the Mahila Karma Samaj of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee to work and do creative work among the women of Bengal. Radu Bibi, the pioneer women including Smt. Inder Prabha Majumdar and Smt. Addressed the gathering and in the same context. Similarly Mrs. Basanti (Mrs. C. R. Das) Mrs. Urmila Devi and Smt. Suniti Devi, the organizer of the Nari Karma Mandir (the residence of a woman activist), was the first woman to introduce civil resistance to the government. As a result, he was arrested for 'obstructing the Calcutta gentlemen' or forcing or influencing him to buy Khadi. Anukul Mitra, Mrs. Surya Shom, Mrs. Umashi Devi, Mrs. Satya Devi and eight Sikh Devi. However, he was released in the evening.

BOMBAY

In metropolitan Mumbai, women joined the non-cooperation campaign. They strengthened the movement through meetings emphasizing the significance of spinning, organization of Khadi fairs and planning of exhibitions became popular. Among the



various women who played important roles in Bombay were Avantika Bai Gokhale, Sarojini Naidu and others. The former remained active during the 1920-46 period and went to prison several times. She founded the Hindu Mahila Sangh to bring nationalist awareness among women. Sarojini Naidu played a pivotal role in addressing a number of gatherings during Satyagraha Week (6 (13 April 1921)) with the aim of engaging a large number of women with the indigenous creative program. Other prominent women performing include Princy and Goshiben Captain, Petit Woman, Jayji Jahangir and Mithubhan, The Faizi Sisters, women of Tayyabji family, Menabai Bahadurji, etc. These well-known women were associated with some of the established women's organizations in Bombay such as Bhagini Samaj, Gujarati Hindu Stri Mandal and Hind Mahila Samaj. Some other women's organizations that came into existence in Bombay in 1921 included the meetings of the Shri Sharda Samaj of Ladar, the Ladies Khilafat Committee and the National Forum, which played the most important role due to their alliance with the Congress.

CONCLUSION

India gained independence on 15th August 1947 due to sacrifice, struggle, struggle, blood donation of freedom fighters. Women must play an important role in India's freedom struggle. Women freedom fighters bravely confronted the police and chased the iron comrades. Hundreds and thousands of Indian women dedicated their lives to achieving the freedom of their motherland. Women should have significant responsibilities in India's freedom struggle. He held public meetings, organized shops selling foreign liquor and articles, sold Khadi and actively participated in the national movement. They bravely faced the police pillars and followed the iron friends. Hundreds and thousands of Indian women dedicated their lives to achieving the independence of their homeland and due to space restrictions only a few can join the cause. The economic exploitation, political dependence, discriminatory policies, religious



intervention, and containment of rebels culminated in the Revolt of 1857, which gave disgruntled leaders of the previous revolt a platform to raise their voice against the company.

In the end we can say that in the last fifty-year, women movement has matured and has progressively deepened its relationship with other movement like trader unions, environmental movements and other progressive movements which fight against all forms of oppression, injustice and degradation.

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