



History

ROLE OF MATANGINI HAZRA IN GANDHIJI'S QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT: AN INTROSPECTION

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ABSTRACT Matangini Hazra was born in 1870 in Hogla village of Tamluk, in undivided Midnapore district, West Bengal, to a Mahisya family (now in West Bengal). She was a significant participant in several independence struggles, such as the protest against the Chowkidari tax and the Salt Satyagraha. She was affectionately known as 'Gandhi Buri.' She commanded one of the five batches of Vidut Bahini volunteers sent to Tamluk by the Samar Parisad (War Council) to seize and hang the Congress flag atop the Tamluk Thana on September 29, 1942. Soldiers under the leadership of Anil Kumar Bhattacharya stopped them on their approach to the thana. Matangini Hazra was shot dead in the fire, holding the Congress flag in her hands. She was the first Quit India campaign victim in Tamluk and Midnapore. The goals of this article are to look into Gandhiji's Quit India Resolution, the role of women in the freedom struggle in Bengal, with a special focus on the Purba Medinipur district, the role of Matangini Hazra in Gandhiji's Quit India movement, and the role of the parallel tamluk national government's Biplabi newspaper. Secondary data was acquired from official publications, censuses, books, and journals for the research.

KEYWORDS : Quit India movement, Gandhiji, Matangini Hazra, Purba Medinipur district, Biplabi newspaper.

Introduction:

Without consulting India's national leaders, the British government dragged the country into World War II in 1939. In addition, the failure of the Cripps Mission in March 1942 caused a significant shift in Congress's stance. The inauguration of Gandhi's leadership in the Nationalist Movement in 1942 was a watershed moment in India's struggle for independence from British control. The Congress Working Committee approved the 'Quit India Resolution' on July 14th, and Congress leaders ratified the 'Quit India Resolution' on August 8th in Bombay. In his public address (Quit India Speech), Mahatma Gandhi said that the upcoming Movement will be the ultimate struggle for freedom. Gandhiji issued a call to 'do or die,' 'nothing less than freedom,' and 'open revolt' on this day. The participation of the Midnapore District in the August Movement was particularly important because in the Tamluk sub-division of this District, a Parallel Civil Administrative System was developed against the harsh British control, resulting in self-government. Matangini Hajra joined the liberation movement in response to Gandhiji's exhortation. She participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932 and was arrested for violating the Salt Act.

Objectives of the study:

- O¹ To investigate Gandhiji's Quit India Resolution.
- O² To investigate the role of women of Bengal in the freedom struggle with special reference to Purba Medinipur district.
- O³ To investigate the role of Matangini Hazra in Gandhiji's Quit India movement.
- O⁴ To investigate the role of Biplabi newspaper of the parallel tamluk national government commented.

Methodology:

The study was based on the secondary data gathered through government publications, censuses, books, and journals.

Findings and discussion:

Quit India Resolution:

Gandhi's final All India Satyagraha on Indian territory was the Quit India Movement. During World War II, a simple yet forceful slogan was issued: "Quit India." The movement was really multi-faceted, all-encompassing, and broad-based; it broke through barriers of caste, creed, community, religion, and sex to establish a mass battle that engulfed the whole nation. The Congress Working Committee approved a lengthy resolution known as the "Quit India Resolution" on July 14, 1942. Initially, this campaign was dubbed the 1942 widespread civil disobedience movement. It was distinguishable from the regulated and restricted individual satyagrahas or civil disobedience of 1941 by its focus on the 'mass' component. The Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 were both intended to be nonviolent actions against British rule in India. In 1941, Gandhi put the atmosphere to the test with the short but symbolic campaign of Individual Satyagraha, in which roughly 23,000 satyagrahis were imprisoned. As he stated in his writings in the Harijan in March 1942, armed resistance against a bigger and better-equipped invader was to be deemed a nonviolent act.

Struggle in Midnapore:

In early 1942, the Congress volunteers succeeded in instilling anti-British sentiment in Midnapore. While the remainder of Bengal's 'Quit India Movement' started as a movement of educated middle-class Gentlemen, it was Midnapore that demonstrated popular participation in its important battle against British rule. Between August 1942 and March 1943, the movement went through three stages. The first phase, known as propaganda and preparation, lasted one month, from August 8th to September 27th, 1942. The second phase, which lasted from September 28 to October 31, was characterised by concentrated and forceful activity. The period from November 1, 1942, to March 31, 1943, was marked by isolated occurrences and disintegration. From June 1942, preparations for launching a mass movement were underway in Midnapore.

The women of Bengal in the freedom struggle:

The people of Midnapore District played a significant role in the 1942 movement.

Against the Japanese invasion, the Tamluk sub-division had organised itself. Several camps, relief committees were organised on a local level. A Khadi Centre was also set up, with four thousand spinners working there. The majority of them were females. (P. Chakraborty, Mitra, Bejin, and Mitra, 1946, p. 22.) The National Government continued to operate until August 8, 1944. It was disbanded at Gandhiji's request. (P. Chakraborty, Mitra, Bejin, and Mitra, 1946, p. 22.)

On November 7, 1942, forty-three people were murdered and seventy were injured in the Tamluk sub-division, according to reports. Women were not permitted to leave their homes in certain circumstances. The police or military stayed on the lookout after the homes were set on fire. The helpers had to rescue the ladies through back doors or ladders thrown over the roof. (A.I.C.C. Library, New Delhi, p. 120.) August Struggle Report issued under the auspices of the All-India Satyagraha Council, U.P. Branch (unpublished). Six hundred troops encircled three Masuria villages, Dalmasuria and Chandipur, in Mohishadal Thana, on January 9, 1943. Not only did the troops loot the communities, but they also assaulted 46 women in a single day. (P. Chakraborty, Mitra, Bejin, and Mitra, 1946, p. 22.)

The ladies formed Bhagini Seva Sangha with the goal of preserving their virginity and honour. With weapons drawn, several of them confronted troops and police. Two women were charged for drawing daggers in self-defense under the Arms Act. (A.I.C.C. Library, New Delhi, p. 120, August Struggle Report made under the auspices of the All-India Satyagraha Council, U.P. Branch (unpublished).)

Involvement in the Quit India movement:

In 1905, she got actively involved in the Indian Independence Movement, with Mahatma Gandhi as her inspiration. Women's engagement in the independence fight in Midnapore was remarkable, and Matangini was one among them. She participated in the Civil Disobedience movement in 1932 and was jailed for violating the Salt

Act. She was imprisoned at Baharampur for six months. She became an active member of the Indian National Congress after her release and began spinning her own Khadi. People began to refer to her as Gandhi Buri (Old Lady Gandhi) because of her commitment to Gandhian values. Matangini used to lead massive procession and was a strong supporter of the Quit India and Non-cooperation campaigns. During the Salt Satyagrah, she sneaked inside Tamluk Court and raised the national flag without attracting the suspicion of the police protecting the building. Her enthusiastic engagement in various rallies resulted in her imprisonment on several times, but the authorities would finally release her due to her advanced age. She was hurt in a police baton charge after attending a sub-divisional Congress convention in Serampore in 1933. When the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson, came to Tamluk to address a public meeting in 1933, Matangini deftly navigated the security and made her way to the dais, where she raised a black flag. For her bravery, she was sentenced to six months in jail. Members of the Congress intended to take over the Medinipur district police stations and other government buildings as part of the Quit India Movement. She led a parade of 6000 supporters to the Tamluk police station on September 29, 1942. The cops opened fire on her as she rushed forward. The gunshot, however, did not deter her from continuing on her way. She was fired at again, but she didn't stop, raising her voice and yelling 'Vande Matram.' As she was fired at for the third time, she raised the flag. She eventually succumbed to her injuries and died holding the flag. She was a lady of extraordinary bravery, gallantry, and perseverance. This was supposed to be the first step in deposing the British authority and establishing an independent Indian state in the area. Matangini Hazra, who was seventy-three years old at the time, led a parade of 6,000 followers, the most of whom were women volunteers, to take over the Tamluk police station. The Crown police ordered the march to dissolve as it reached the outskirts of town, citing Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. Matangini Hazra was shot once as she took a step forward. She had apparently taken a step forward and was pleading with the officers not to fire at the throng.

The Biplabi newspaper of the parallel tamluk national government commented:

"Matangini led one procession from the north of the criminal court building; even when the gunfire began, she continued to march with the tri-color flag, leaving all the volunteers behind," the alternative tamluk national government's Biplabi newspaper said. She was shot three times by the cops. Despite wounds to her forehead and both hands, she kept marching. "She continued yelling Vande Mataram, which means 'hail to the Motherland,' while she was shot repeatedly. She died with the Indian National Congress flag still fluttering high over her head. The alternative Tamluk administration incited open revolt by glorifying her 'martyrdom for her nation' and was able to exist for two more years, until Gandhi ordered it dismantled in 1944.

Conclusion:

Matangini Hajra joined the liberation movement in response to Gandhiji's exhortation. She participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1932 and was arrested for violating the Salt Act. Her vigorous participation in the 'August Movement' in 1942 will never be widely acknowledged. Matangini slipped by guards and raised a black flag when Bengal Governor Sir John Anderson came in Tamluk to address a public gathering in 1933. Matangini Hazra led a march of 6,000 followers, largely women volunteers, to take over the Tamluk police station. While spearheading the 'Quit India' campaign, Birangana Matangini Hajra was shot dead by British police at the Tamluk court premises in Medinipur on September 29, 1942.

When India gained independence in 1947, Matangini Hazra's name was given to a number of institutions, colonies, and streets. Matangini Hazra's monument was the first to be erected in independent India, in Kolkata, in 1977. In Tamluk, a monument currently stands where she was murdered. The postal service released a set of postage stamps in 2002 to commemorate the sixty-year anniversary of the Quit India Movement. A five-rupee postal stamp featuring Matangini Hazra's reproduction was among them. Hazra Road, an important thoroughfare in south Kolkata, is named for the brave independence warrior.

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