



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

History

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE (1857-1947)

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ABSTRACT

Without highlighting the participation of women, the history of the Indian liberation struggle would be lacking. The sacrifice made by Indian women will take precedence above all others. The stories of women's bravery, selflessness, and sacrifice in the struggle for freedom is abundant. Many of us are unaware that hundreds of women fought alongside their male colleagues in battle. They fought with unwavering courage and true passion. The Indian women broke free from a number of limitations and their conventional duties and obligations that were focused on the home. Everyone talks about the important part that the male liberation fighters performed. Without female freedom fighters, however, the realization of an independent India would remain a pipe dream. Many people are unaware of how certain people went from being second-class citizens, domestic abuse victims, members of an uneducated populace, and practitioners of the sati system to becoming outstanding freedom fighting leaders. From participating in the revolt of 1857 to the Gandhian er, practising saytagraha, promoting Khadi and picketing liquor stores, Indian women have had a significant impact on this journey. Usha Mehta, Rajkumari Gupta, Aruna Asaf Ali, Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi, Rani Gaidinliu, Amal Prabha Das, Azizam Bai, Gulan Kaur and Sarojini Naidu are just a few of the notable women who played crucial roles in achieving India's independence from British domination. They have made a substantial and honorable contribution to the entire independence effort.

INTRODUCTION-

The role that great women played in the path of the Indian liberation struggle is not too much mentioned in our history books, according to the untold history of India. The history is replete with the names of notable men who fought for freedom. The accomplishment of India's independence would have remained a dream without the aid of women's movements and liberation fighters. These women's organizations and individual women came forward, took the initiative, and played a crucial role when the great freedom warrior was imprisoned. India is a nation that is supported by customs, caste systems, gender disparities, and traditional human behavior. Women were kept inside the four walls of their homes, ignorant of the outside world, and were regarded as second-class citizens in the pre-independence era. Females were not educated, and no skill development training was offered to them. During the Vedic period, education was accessible to women in India, but it gradually lost importance over time. Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotiba Phule, and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar overcame many obstacles to advance women's status and abolish the sati system. There were numerous well-known women who fought for India's independence, such as Rani Lakshmi Bai. We may go back to 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar, who fought for her country's liberation against the British, and Madam Bhaikaji Cama, who fought for her motherland's freedom after the 1857 Uprising, both became the first women socialists. The role of women in the anti-imperialist struggle is enormous. For the sake of bringing independence to their country's people, women in India endured tremendous torture, misery, and exploitation. The incredible sacrifices made by women during the struggle for liberation are highly valued. The part performed at several occasions including the First War for Independence (1857-1858), the Jalianwalabagh Massacre (1919), the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), Civil Disobedience and the Dandi March (1930) and the Quit India Movement (1942). Women from all walks of life, including those from educated and liberal households, as well as those from various castes, religious communities, and rural lifestyles, joined forces to fight for the freedom of their motherland. There are more than 100 women freedom fighters who took part and sacrificed their lives for their nation, but only few of their names are listed in the literature. As a predominantly male society, India has not spoken much about the role performed by women, who should be given the highest respect and recognition for their sacrifices.

The primary areas of inquiry in this paper include the following:

1. Recognize the significance of women in India's struggle for independence.

2. The contribution made by various women's organizations and the women's movement to the independence of India.
3. A thorough examination of specific female freedom fighters who engaged in untold battles with the British to win our independence.
4. The sacrifice and contribution made by every woman who fought for freedom, from the Revolt of 1857 to the Independence of Indian nation.

Valuable events in India's freedom struggle-

1. The first war of Independence (1857-58)
2. Partition of Bengal, Swadeshi Movement (1905)
3. Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919)
4. Non-cooperation movement (1920)
5. Poorna Swaraj declaration by the Indian National Congress; Meerut conspiracy case (1929)
6. Civil disobedience: The Dandi March (1930)
7. The Quit India Movement (1942)

Women played an important role in the fight for India's independence from colonial control and the British Raj. For our freedom, they endured various forms of exploitation and suffering. Take a look at these underappreciated Indian women who fought for freedom. These women's tenacity and fortitude in the face of difficulty, their bravery in facing death, and their intense love and devotion to their motherland all serve the same purpose: to pique our curiosity and inspire us to work toward a better world. However, these women leaders have long since passed away and have been forgotten. They provided selfless sacrifices and even laid down their lives for the freedom and prosperity of their country.

1. Matangini Hazra (1870-1942)-

Gandhi Buri was another name for Matangini Hazra. She took part in the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Quit India Movement. She carried the Indian flag in front of a procession even after being shot three times. She repeatedly yelled "Vande Mataram." In 1977, Hazra's statue became the country of Independent India's first statue of a woman. She was slain at Tamluk, where the statue now stands. In Kolkata, Hazra Road is also named in her honour.

2. Kanaklata Barua (1924-1942)-

Birbala is another name for Kanaklata Barua. She was an Assamese freedom warrior in India. In 1942 at Barangabari, she played a key role in the Quit India Movement and led the women volunteers' line while holding the National Flag. She attempted to raise the flag at the British-run Gohpur Police Station while yelling phrases like "British imperialists should go back," but

the British prevented her from doing so. Even though she made an effort to convince the British police that she had good intentions, they shot her along with several other picketers, and she gave her life for the nation at the age of 18.

3. Aruna Asaf Ali (1909-1996)-

She is referred to as "The Grand Old Lady" of the Independence Movement in India. During the Quit India Movement. She raised the national flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay. After being put in jail, she took part in following protest rallies, including the Salt Satyagraha movement. She organized political prisoners and went on a hunger strike and participated in subsequent protest marches, such as the Salt Satyagraha movement. She was imprisoned and participated in subsequent protest marches, such as the Salt Satyagraha to protest the poor treatment received in the prisons.

4. Bhikhaiji Cama (1861-1936)-

She was born to a Parsi family in Bombay on September 24, 1861 as Bhikhaiji Rustom Cama, a prominent figure in the Indian Nationalist Movement (now Mumbai). We are, after all, discussing none other than renowned liberation warrior Madam Cama. Her father Sorabji Framji Patel was a prominent figure in the Parsi society, and she came from a respectable household. She stressed the equality of men and women. She donated all of her possessions to support a young girls' orphanage. She also went to Germany in 1907 as an Indian ambassador to raise the Indian National Flag.

5. Tara Rani Shrivastava -

In Saran, Bihar, Tara Rani was raised in a modest household before marrying Phulendu Babu. In 1942, they joined Gandhi Ji's Quit India Movement, controlled demonstrations, and made plans to hoist the Indian flag atop the Siwan Police Station. They were able to assemble a mob, and they marched with the scream "Inquilab" toward the Siwan Police Station. The police started shooting as they marched toward them. Phulendu was struck and crumpled to the floor. Unfazed, Tara used her sari to wrap him in a bandage and led the mob to the station while yelling "Inquilab" and waving the Indian flag. When Tara returned, her husband had already passed away, but she persisted in assisting the independence movement.

6. Capt. Lakshmi Sahgal (1914-2012)-

Captain Lakshmi was the name of a former Indian Army officer named Lakshmi Sahgal. She had spent a prison sentence in Burma for her involvement in World War II before joining INA as well. Bose's charismatic leadership and allure to the freedom cause attracted Sahgal to the cause. She actively participated in the creation of the INA's all-female Infantry Regiment, which was given the name Rani of Jhansi in honour of the woman who fought the British Raj in 1857. She was the only female member of Bose's Cabinet, which oversaw the Azad Hind Fauj's temporary administration. After being detained in 1945, she was returned to India. She wed Colonel Prem Kumar Sahgal, who had served in the INA with her, in 1947. Sahgal returned to Kanpur in the years after India's freedom to practice medicine. She worked with post-partition Indian refugees. She joined the CPI/CPM in 1971, came to Kolkata, and spent six years working in the border regions of Bongaon.

7. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya (1903-1988)-

She was a renowned theatre performer and a social reformer who was crucial to India's war for independence. She became the first Indian woman to be detained by the British government as a result of her active participation in the role of a patriotic leader. She was a special person who was adored for being a fearless social reformer and committed freedom fighter. She improved the social status of Indian women, revived and supported theatre, and promoted handicrafts. In 1930, she participated in Gandhi Ji's salt satyagraha as well. She was the first woman to run for office in the Legislative Assembly. The All India Women's Conference was established in large part thanks to her contributions.

8. Kalpana Datta (1913-1995) -

It is impossible to ever forget Kalpana Dutta's contribution to the liberation of Bengal from British rule. She fought alongside Bengali revolutionaries. In addition to being educated to operate a rifle and knowing how to build cartridges, she used to covertly deliver ammo to the freedom fighters. In addition to this, she frequently pretended to be a boy when she travelled to meet revolutionaries. She read numerous biographies and accounts of liberation fighters while in high school, which had a profound impact on her mental health. She made friends with revolutionary women like Pritilata Waddedar and Bina Das while in college. She also got to meet Surya Sen, a.k.a. "Master Da," and joined his group, the Indian Republic Army. Her team robbed the Chittagong Armory in 1930 after joining the anti-British movement, which brought her to the attention of the British. She was forced to discontinue her studies as a result, although she kept in touch with Surya Sen. Surya Sen and Pritilata Waddedar gave her the assignment to attack a European club in Chittagong on September 19, 1931. Even though she was being watched by British forces prior to the attack, she was taken prisoner and later released on bail when the accusations against her were found to be untrue. She maintained her movement after the event and spent two years in hiding with Surya Sen. She was raided by the police on February 16, 1933. While Kalpana was able to flee by shooting on the British Army, Surya Sen was apprehended. They then pursued her, and on May 19, 1933, she was ultimately taken into custody. Resuming the trial in the Chittagong Armory robbery case, Surya Sen was awarded the death penalty while Kalpana received a life sentence. Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi worked very hard to get Dutta out from prison in 1939. She finished her education and received her degree from Calcutta University in 1940 after being released from prison. She received the moniker "Veer Mahila" in 1979. Her memoirs was originally written in Bengali and was afterwards translated into English as "Chittagong Armory Raiders: Reminiscence."

9. Sucheta Kripalani (1908-1974) -

She rose to prominence during the Quit India Movement and was detained by British forces, just as her contemporaries Aruna Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta. With Mahatma Gandhi, she later collaborated closely during the Partition riots. In 1946, she travelled with him to Noakhali. She was among the few women elected to India's Constituent Assembly. She was a member of the subcommittee that wrote the Indian Constitution and was elected as the first female chief minister of Uttar Pradesh from the Kanpur constituency. She joined the group that drafted the Indian constitution's guiding principles. [Reference needed] She performed Vande Mataram in the Constituent Assembly's Independence Session on August 14, 1947, just before Jawaharlal Nehru gave his renowned "Tryst with Destiny" speech. [10] She also started the All India Mahilla Congress, which was founded in 1940. Gandhian, politician, and liberation warrior Sucheta Kriplani was from India. a founding member of the All India Mahila Congress and the first woman to hold the office of Chief Minister of a State in India (UP). She sang Vande Mataram in front of the Constituent Assembly on August 15, 1947.

10. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1887-1964) -

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the first Indian woman to serve as the health minister of Independent India, a position she held for the following ten years. She served as Mahatma Gandhi's secretary before taking over as health minister. Kaur implemented various reforms that completely changed India's healthcare system when she was in office. Kaur responded to Gandhi's message by renouncing all the luxuries of royalty and starting to practise self-discipline. She was quoted by The Indian Express as saying about Gandhi, "He fann[ed] the flames of my intense desire to see India free from foreign oppression." She worked on a number of other social concerns, including child marriage, purdah, and the devadasi system, in addition to the fight of independence. She had the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, and a spinning wheel with her when she was imprisoned following the Quit India movement.

11. Rani Lakshmi Bai (1828-1858)

One of the greatest fighters in India's quest for freedom was Rani Lakshmi Bai. She represented bravery, nationalism, respect for oneself, gallantry, tenacity, and opposition against British tyranny. By battling till her last breath for the welfare of women in the country and the cause of India's independence, she made the most remarkable contribution to the country's freedom war. Lakshmi Bai was adamant that the East India Company would not receive Jhansi. Beginning on May 10, 1857, at Meerut, the Indian uprising. News of the beef and pork-coated bullet casings quickly travelled throughout India. Lakshmi Bai, who was in charge of Jhansi at the time, started leading her forces to put an end to the conflict that other princes had started. Lakshmi Bai was adamant that Jhansi would not be accepted by the East India Company. The Indian rebellion started on May 10, 1857, in Meerut. The bullet casings covered in beef and pork swiftly spread throughout India. The struggle that other princes had started was put an end to by Lakshmi Bai, who was in control of Jhansi at the time. She subsequently joined Taty Tope and other rebel forces there. They then went to Gwalior, where she gathered rebel forces, and there they overthrew the Gwalior Maharaja. On June 18, 1858, the second day of combat, she suffered a grievous injury and passed away. However, British searchers were unable to locate Lakshmi Bai's body. It's thought that a fast and covert funeral was held.

12. Annie Besant (1847-1933) -

Annie Besant was a well-known political activist, freedom warrior and supporter of women's rights and the anti-Church movement. Besant joined the National Secular Society and the Fabian Society in the 1870s, organizations that fought for freedom of thought and an end to the Catholic Church's oppression in England. She joined the Theosophical Society as a result of her interest in the socialist movement and her search for spiritual comfort. Her time spent as a society member led her to develop an attraction for Hinduism and its moral principles. She travelled to India in 1893 with the intention of promoting Theosophical Society beliefs. Soon after arriving in India, she was moved by the ongoing struggle for Independence. Besant's establishment of the Home Rule League in 1916 is her most famous contribution to the Indian freedom movement. Besant continued the historic campaign that marked a turning point in the long-running Indian liberation struggle alongside Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The crusade, which was modelled after the Irish Home Rule movement, sought to make India a Dominion like Australia and Canada. The Indian Home Rule League's actions significantly aided the liberation struggle during the movement's two-year duration. Besant was placed under house arrest in 1917 as a result of her involvement in the Home Rule campaign. Widespread protests over her arrest resulted in her release later on. She maintained her defiance while imprisoned and raised the green and red flag that served as the movement's emblem. Besant passed away on September 20, 1933, in India. She was a strong, vocal lady who worked as a social worker, fought for religious liberty, and actively participated in the freedom movement of the nation she called home during her whole life.

13. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)-

Sarojini Naidu is an underappreciated name among the women who helped India gain her independence. In addition to fighting for freedom, Sarojini Naidu was a prominent poet in India. She also receives the moniker "Nightingale of India." While studying in England, Sarojini got to know notable literary prizewinners like Edmond Gosse and Arthur Symonds. Gosse advised Naidu to use Indian elements in her poetry. Through her poetry, Naidu captured the people and events of modern India. She published three books: "The Golden Threshold" in 1905, "The Bird of Time" in 1912, and "The Broken Wing" in 1917. Both India and England were avid readers of her works. Naidu used her oratory talents to join the freedom cause. She promoted women's equality and empowerment. She urged women to leave their homes and fight for the nation's independence. In 1917, Naidu travelled to London with Home Rule president Annie Besant to

testify in favour of women's suffrage before the Joint Select Committee. Additionally, she expressed support for the Lucknow Pact, an united Hindu-Muslim call for better political reform in Britain. Naidu joined Gandhi's satyagraha and nonviolent movement that same year. In 1919, as part of her campaign against British rule, Naidu also joined the non-cooperation movement. In 1925, Naidu also took office as the Indian National Congress' first female president. Gandhi was convinced by her to allow women to participate in the Salt March in 1930. Under the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Sarojini Naidu attended the Round Table Conference in London in 1931. However, in 1932, she was put in jail. Naidu faced jail in 1941 as a result of her participation in the Quit India Movement. Naidu was appointed as Uttar Pradesh's first governor in 1947, the year India attained independence. She held onto her position until her passing in 1949. One of the most well-known female writers and independence fighters who promoted women's involvement in politics in India is Sarojini Naidu. One of the most well-known female writers and independence fighters who promoted women's involvement in politics in India is Sarojini Naidu.

CONCLUSION-

If the achievements of women were not acknowledged, the history of the Indian Freedom Struggle would be lacking. The Indian women's sacrifice will take precedence. Despite innumerable exploitations, torturous treatment, and challenges, they fought bravely and gallantly to preserve our independence. The fight was taken over by the women when the majority of the male freedom fighters were imprisoned. There are many wonderful ladies whose names have been recorded in history for their unwavering commitment to serving India. For example, leaders like Matati Choudhary, Subhadra Joshi, Basanti Sen, Ahslata Sen, Kanakhalat Barua, Tara Rani Srivastava, Kamaladevi Chattipadhyay, Moolmati, Durgabai Deshmuka, and Rukmini Lakshmi pathi are among the more than 100 women who participated in the freedom struggle for an independent India. Countless women who sacrificed their lives and endured exploitation, hardship, and torture during this journey include Tarkeshwari Sinha, Abadi Bano Begum, Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Indira Gandhi, Nalinibala Devi, Accamma Cherman, Chandraprava Saikiani, Amal Prabha Das, Azizam Bai, Gulan Kaur, Bhogeshwari Phukhanai, Bhimabai Holkar, Siverine. On this journey, countless others lost their lives and endured untold amounts of exploitation, suffering, and torture. In the Indian subcontinent, women make up a significant portion of the population, which has greatly facilitated women's access to education, career possibilities, and an end to the caste and pardah systems.

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