

ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE DURING GANDHIAN ERA

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ABSTRACT

The role and efforts of women for freedom movement begins very early. The Struggle for freedom was won with the Combine participation and efforts of man and woman both. In India, woman has a significant role in society since the early days Manu regarded that where women are respected, God resides there. So, we can say that during the ancient period Women enjoy a significant status in the society. But with the passage of time, we observe the decline in the status of women. But with the entry of Gandhi ji in the freedom struggle in 20th century he recognizes the power of females and not only provides them opportunities to participate in freedom struggle but also stressed that the women has more efficacy and skills So she can play a great role to support the freedom movements. The effort and role of women in freedom struggle increased when Gandhiji organized meetings for non-cooperation movements with non-violent methods. Many females took parts in the meetings. In this paper we will discuss about the active role of women in freedom struggle. The contribution of many females in history was ignored and they did not get proper place in the writing's. Through this paper we will try to aware people about the sacrifices of the female freedom fighters.

KEYWORDS: Freedom, Freedom Fighter, Gandhi Ji, Movement, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women play a great role in the freedom movement in India. It is impossible to get freedom without the support and participation of females. Firstly, we have to discuss the position of female in Indian

Hindu society in 20th century. Female faced many types of social evils, but then also they participate in all events of movements for Freedom struggle. When the great freedom fighters were in jail, women play very prominent role. Many women groups and individual movement came out and took initiatives for freedom movement. Although during that period Women were considered as secondary in the society and they were victims of dowry death, Sati, honor killing, child marriages, Polygamy, Harassment of widow and there were opposition of widow remarriages. But in spite of all these problems, the time changed During the Gandhian era. Many women participated in freedom struggle of India. Gandhi ji believed that women had special ability for Peace building and according to him, it is injustice by men to call women as weaker sex. It is a liable. Woman has the power to create and destroy. Under the guidance of Gandhi ji, women shoulder critical responsibilities in Indian struggles. Mahatma Gandhi expressed confidence in women. In 1921, Gandhi ji said that he expected women to contribute to the struggle. Even if the government captures each and every struggle, they have no objection because women can easily complete this task. When Gandhi ji started the Satyagraha movement, women responded to his call, Participated in it enthusiastically and took out a procession to spread the propaganda of Gandhi's experiment, for which many women were also arrested. Bengal was in the forefront of this freedom movement and many women participated there. There the Mahila Karya Samaj and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee Organizations formed and addressed by women members and organized by Mrs. Indra Prabha Majumdar and Mrs. Radu Vivi. On being called upon to address the meetings, many women gave up their ornaments and also boycotted foreign goods. They held public meetings, took dharna on liquor shops and participate in all movements led by Gandhi ji for freedom struggle.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Suruchi Thaper, Women in Indian National Movement (2006) Thaper highlight the work of many female leaders, who worked for the freedom struggle. She describes the role of Sarojini Naidu, Annie Basant (the leader of home rule) Vijayalakshmi pandit etc. She also discusses the problem of those females who participated in the movement. she also focus to explain the role of lower-middle class females in the political movements.
- Kaur, Harjinder, 'Role of Women in the Freedom Struggle,1885 to 1947. This book covers all aspect of Freedom Movement and analyses the role of prominent female leaders and provides the in-depth study of the work and role of the women's who belongs to common

family.

- Manmohan Kaur (1985) This book covers all aspects of the work and efforts of women in freedom struggle. This book starts from 1857 when the first attempt for independence was started and provide a detailed view up to 1947.
- Nawaz Mody, (2000) women in India's Freedom Struggle, This book comprises many papers contributed by scholars related to the work and efforts of Indian women in freedom struggle.
- Bala, Usha, Indian Women Freedom Fighters (1986) this book covers the Indian struggle starting from first war of independence to the final independence. Writer focus on the women social reformers and their efforts for the political and social rights of women and also describe the untold stories of women from the freedom struggle.
- P. N. Chopra, (1975) Women in India Freedom Struggle, this book explains about the selfless work and efforts done by the women for freedom movement. it explains about the entry of women in politics and active participation in the freedom movements.

III. OBJECTIVES

- A. To create awareness about the women freedom fighters in National movement in India.
- B. To provide proper place to female freedom fighters in History.
- C. To aware about the Gandhi and his thought about the women.
- D. To analyse the role & work of females in freedom movement.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To write the paper secondary data is used, books written by eminent scholars related to this aspect and articles & research papers published in Journals etc. has been considered for the sources and references.

V. WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF INDIA

- A. **Basanti Devi:** Basanti Devi, the wife of independent activist Chitranjan Das, also took an active part in many social and political movements. Basanti Devi and her sister Urmila Devi sell khadi clothes in Kolkata to motivate public for the boycott of foreign clothes. She was the first Indian women who arrested during the non-cooperation movement for selling khadi, she was arrested with Smt. Shurya Shome, smt. Anukul Mitter, Satya Devi and some Sikh

ladies, they all were released at midnight but it widespread as criticism. Bangalar Katha a weekly publication was under the charge of Basanti devi. In 1921-22, she was selected the President of Provincial Congress of Bengal. She was active Protesters and participated in Khilafat and Civil Disobedience movement. She established Nari Karam Mandir with the help of her sister-in-law Urmila Devi and Sunita Devi for the training of female workers. she also Worked for the cultural developments.

B. Kasturbha Gandhi: A lot has been written about Mahatma Gandhi at national and international level. But his wife Kasturbha Gandhi has been ignored. While his wife was his integral companion and played an important role in this journey. Her leadership is seen to be tarnished in front of Gandhi ji but her contribution was important in the Indian independence movement. She was in favor of taking independent decisions. She had indomitable courage. Similarly, her indomitable courage can be seen during the imprisonment the way she had inspired other female prisoners. Despite being uneducated, she was able to keep manage accounts and soon she became the talk of the town for her dignified and graceful manner. Kasturbha Gandhi first involved in social activity in South Africa in Durban. When she helped Gandhi ji in 1904. She was arrested in 1913 and imprisonment for 3 months for participating in protest against the behavior of Europeans towards to Indian immigrants in South Africa. when Gandhi ji was in Champaran, in mid of 1917 Kasturbha ji works for the welfare of women. In September 1920, the session of Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta and the Non-Cooperation Movement was passed. The Non-Cooperation Movement was started and it was a huge mass movement in which the feeling of patriotism was awakened in millions of people of India and people participated enthusiastically. At this time Kasturbha ji along with Gandhi ji, went from village to village in Gujarat and appealed to the women to run the charkha and use Khadhi to boycott foreign goods. Kasturbha ji also preside over the Gujarat Provincial Conference in 1922, but the Non-cooperation movement was suspended after the Chaura–Chori incident and Gandhi ji took a fast. As soon as Kasturbha ji got this news, along with Anusuya, and Mrs. Santan they Reached Bardoli. Where Gandhi ji was prosecuted, he was imprisoned for six years. Kasturbha ji was also kept in Sabarmati Jail for 10 days but later she was released. She faced all these problems bravely and also appealed to women through an article published in Young India on 23 March 1922. Urged to continue creative work like spinning wheel. They did this work not only for the solution of economic problems it was also a way of freedom from political bondage. Many merchants

boycotted foreign trade and many women and men also boycotted the use of foreign goods. The use of Indian made clothes was started. The civil disobedience movement was started and when Gandhi ji was arrested, she participated and lead the movement. She addressed the meetings but she was arrested on 11 January 1929 and sent to Sabarmati jail for imprisonment she was in jail for one and half month. Her Companions were also arrested and sent to jail but she protested and after the released she lead to the movement and arrested again for six months. In 1939, she was arrested for protesting the reason of terror against the ruler of Rajkot. In 1942, also during the Quit India Movement, she was arrested. Kasturbha ji was a real self-sacrificing personality and all the movements started by Gandhi ji was successful because of the support of her . She supported Gandhi ji throughout his life and she is really a freedom fighter and inspiration to all women.

- C. Sarojini Naidu:** Sarojini Naidu is very prominent and active freedom fighter among the women freedom fighters of India. She was born in Hyderabad in February 1879. She was a genius child, freedom fighter and good poet. She is known as nightingale of India. she was an excellent student and fluent in many languages i.e. Urdu, English, Telugu, Bengali and Persian. she advocated for the female’s rights. She motivates women for the participation of freedom movement. She helped Reddy to established the ‘Women’s Indian Association in 1917. She met Annie Besant in 1917 who was the President of Home Rule League , she accompanied with her to support women suffrage. She also supports Lucknow Pact. Sarojini Naidu joined Gandhi ji Satyagrah and Nonviolence movement. She joined Non-Co-operation Movement led by Gandhi ji in 1919. Sarojini Naidu appointed as ambassador of the Home Rule League in July 1919 to England at the time of passing the Government India Act, 1919 But the Act didn’t provide representation to women in legislative assembly. She returned to India and joined non-cooperation movement. Sarojini Naidu was elected as president of Indian National Congress in 1925. The session of the congress was held in Kanpur and she was first woman who selected as president of Indian National Congress. She visited New York in October 1928 for the support of India’s independence movement. She became the representative of India and visited south Africa in 1932. She always stressed on the view that the movements for freedom can be successful only when female took active participation in these movements. She believes that the women are true Nation Builders. She always support the female rights ,in 1930 she wrote a pamphlet for bringing women into the Political Struggle. When Gandhi ji was arrested in April 1930, Sarojini Naidu was appointed as leader

of that campaign. Sarojini Naidu was also arrested in 1932 and released after some months along with Gandhi Ji. She was arrested in 1942 for participating in Quit India Movement and this time she was imprisoned for 21 months. So after the analysis of work and role played by her we can say that Sarojini Naidu was a real fighter of freedom movement and real example for the Women Empowerment.

D. Bai Amman: Bai Amma belongs to a Muslim family. she participated in freedom movement and support the establishment of Panchayat throughout India. she advocated for the use of khadi and promote the Hindu Muslim Unity. For promoting Hindu Muslim Unity, she visited Rawalpindi Kasur and Gujranwala. During the Punjab visit she address the public and advised that it is better for all of us if we left freedom and Swaraj for our children in spite of house and ornaments. Bai Amman also address the conference in Bombay of approximately 6000 people and motivated women to participate in activity of freedom movements and to enroll themselves for the legislative Assembly she also appealed to people to fight and cooperation and advise to work collectively to liberate themselves from British rule. Bai Amman was prosecuted for her objectionable speech but her arrest was not considered advisable. Gandhi ji send a message to Bai Amman on the Arrested of Gandhiji in 1922 to carry the work which they have left Behind and said that her work and Pray is sufficient to ensure the quick release and success of them. Bai Amman continued the work till her death in 1924. Gandhiji paid tribute to her for promoting the Hindu Muslim Unity and promoting the people for the use of Khadi.

E. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay: Kamla Devi Ji was a great freedom fighter. she played a prominent Role in freedom movement. She was born in 1903 in Mangalore and she was married in very young age and unfortunately her husband died after sometime of her marriage so she was a child widow but in these adverse circumstances also she continued her study and remarried with Harinder Nath Chattopadhyay and presented example to society of widow remarriage and inter caste marriage. she joined Congress in 1922. she was the first lady who participated in the elections of Legislative Assembly in Madras in 1926. she participated in international Congress of women League in 1929 which was held in Prague. She participated in civil disobedience movement and prepared salt, picketing foreign clothes, dharna on liquor shops and address the meetings. she was arrested by the British government. Her message for the public was to carry on the fights until British imperialism became only a Dark Shadow of

the past India. Freedom will open the gate for world freedom. During the court trials Kamla Devi was Fearlessly invited magistrate to resign the job and join the Satyagrah. For this act she was imprisoned for six months and also fine for 150 Rupees. She was released in 1930. she worked for the opening of the branches of several worldwide. she was in charge of women organization of Hindustan Seva dal and she arranged many camps for women. The camp courses were designed for literary education, hygiene, sewing and spinning works and for the study of history & geography of India. These courses were framed to make women fit for all circumstances and according to the need of Nation. She was also the vice chairperson of the Bombay young League and presided over the conference in October 1931 at Lahore. She was again arrested in 1932 and imprisoned for one year. She plays a great role to motivate and educate the women for participating in freedom movement

F. Usha Mehta: she was born in Surat in 1920. she was one of the most prominent followers of Gandhi ji. she was only eight years old when she participated in freedom movement. Firstly, she participated for the movement against the Simon Commission. She actively participated in Civil Disobedience activities like picketed of foreign clothes and protests to spinning cotton and to boycott the foreign goods. Usha Mehta started the secret Congress Radio with some others on 14 August 1942. The radio broadcast the messages of Gandhi Ji and many other leaders to the common public. The station changed its place After every broadcast the station was changed due to the threat of the government. She managed to continue the station with the help of two other activists, Chandrakant Babubhai Jhaveri and Vithaldas K Jhaveri, along with Nanka Motwane, whose family owned a telephone company called Chicago Radio. Nariman Printer, an amateur radio operator, also helped. In the beginning, the broadcasting was in Hindi and English both and two times in a day. But after some time, it was broadcasting only one time in the evening 7:30 to 8:30 pm. Gandhi ji and some other political leaders were arrested for their speech. But the movement spread all across the country because of the efforts of common peoples and underground press. On 12th November, police raided the office of Babubhai Khakkhar's at that time Usha Mehta was recalled an interview and was present in the same building but when she and her colleagues were busy to preparing the program and played “ the song and slogans, Hindustan Hamara, and some other news bulletins and a speech and when they were at the end of the program, playing 'Vande Mataram', the door was knocked by the authorities ,they ordered them to stop the programme. But they refused to stop the programme so they were arrested by the British

authorities and sent them to the jail. Their equipment and other revolutionary material were seized and Mehta and some other freedom fighters were sent to the jail for four years and released in April 1946. Usha Mehta was honoured by Padma Vibhushan, in 1998 for her commendable work in freedom movement.

VI. CONCLUSION

Gandhiji believed that in the freedom movement activities non-violence & satyagrah was most powerful weapon. It includes disobedience in which intentionally the unjust laws break peacefully. It means to challenge, protest and make agitation publicly. Because females are more supportive to non-violence and peace, so it can be used as a more powerful weapon to get justice and equality with the participation of females in freedom struggle. According to Gandhi ji the final stage of non-violence and satyagrah can be achieved only when the females in large numbers make efforts to challenge the male dominance. During the time of Gandhiji, the prominent females like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Parvati devi, Radha devi, Durgabai, Bhag Devi and So many other prominent females participated in freedom struggle and sacrificed their lives. They experience many hardships and imprisoned by the British government. But the work of these females as freedom fighters was unremarkable in the Indian History. The work and efforts of females in freedom struggle motivate their children's and others to contribute in freedom struggle. The participation of common females makes them political leaders and provides supports to the freedom movement.

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