

SJIF Impact Factor - 5.67

E- ISSN 2582-5427

# AKSHARA

Multidisciplinary Research Journal  
Peer-Reviewed & Refereed International Research Journal  
July 2022 Special Issue 06 Volume I

75  
आज़ादी का  
अमृत महोत्सव



Chief Editor : **Dr. Girish S. Koli**, AMRJ  
For Details Visit To - [www.aimrj.com](http://www.aimrj.com)



**Akshara Publication**

## Role of Women in Indian Freedom Struggle

Dr. Anil kumar Shrivastava  
Dept. of Political science  
Assistant professor (selection grade)  
Govt. R.B.R.N.E.S.P.G. College Jashpur Nagar

**Abstract:-**  
Women played a pivotal role in achieving India's independence. Women leaders made a significant mark of their valor and will as early as in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and set the stage for emphasizing that women were in no way willing to be relegated to the backdrop of the freedom struggle. Later on the Indian freedom movement was a series of historic events with the ultimate aim of ending British rule in India from 1857-1947. [1] The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women. However their struggles and contributions to the Movement are never recognized at the same level of Prominence as that of Men. Numerous Women Continued to Contribute to the Movement through Military and Revolutionary Leadership, Political leadership and Social Activism. Their names are seldom heard, when most of the Men folk were in prison the women came forward and took charge of the struggle. The wave of their unprecedented valour and enthusiasm had surprised the British Government. They fought with true spirit and undaunted Courage and faced various tortures exploitation and hardships to get ultimate freedom.

**The First War of Indian Independence:-**

Maharani Velu Nachiyar (1730-1796) bravely fought with the British army decades before the 1857 revolt. She probably remains the only queen to have defeated the British army successfully. As early as 1817 Bhima Bai Holkar fought against the British Colonel Malcolm and defeated him in Guerilla warfare. [2] Rani Chennamma, the widowed queen of Raja Malla Sarja fought bravely, frustrated the machinations of British to Annex Kittore.

The first war of Indian Independence was the first expression of organized resistance against the British East India Company. Although the leaders joined the movement for different reasons, their one common aim was to turnout the English and win independence for the country. The Doctrine of Lapse, issue of Greased Cartridges to Indian Soldiers at Meerut, triggered the fire. Number of Social reforms, British Education System had infuriated a very wide section of Indian People soon became a widespread agitation and posed a grave challenge to the British rule.

In Jhansi, the revolt was led by Rani Laxmi Bai whose state was annexed by Lord Dalhousie on the basis of Doctrine of Lapse. She is regarded as a fearless warrior who played a major role in the first war of Independence and fought against the British for their freedom.

She is model of patriotism, self respect, courage and perseverance, another vital role played by the women in the war of Independence of 1857, Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi of Ramgarh, Rani Jindan Kour, Chouhan Rani, Rani Tace Bai, Baiza Bai, Tapaswini Maharani, daringly laid their troops into the battle fields. Begum Hazarat Mahal was the wife of the deposed ruler of Lucknow gave resistance in the revolt of 1857.

**Impact of the Social Religious Reform:-** The impact of the social religious reform movement was huge and long lasting especially against social evils. Such as atrocities on women through purdah, child marriage, hyper gamy, dowry and sex based inequality.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy has rightly been called the "Father of Indian Renaissance". Some other enlightened Indians like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, Keshav Chandra Sen and many other women activists started to bring in reforms in society. So that it could face the challenge of the west.

It is the impact of the reformers, the Govt. of India Act 1856, legalized the marriage of Hindus Widows and Inter Caste Marriage and penalized polygamy. Child marriage Act of 1872 banned child marriage and fixed minimum Age of marriage at 14 for the Girl and 18 for the Boy. These reforms helped the women to participate actively. Mainly awakening Started in the province of Bengal.

**Indian National Congress:-**

From the very beginning membership of the Indian National Congress was open to women, A.O.Hume even went ahead asked political reformers of all shades of opinion never to forget "unless the elevation of the female element of the nation proceeds Pari Passu (with an equal pace) with their work all their labour for the political enfranchisement of the country will prove vain."

Not less than ten ladies delegates attended the fourth session of the Congress at Bombay in 1889. In fact the participation of women in this Congress appears to have been mainly Rama Bai's doing.

During Curzon regime Partition of Bengal announced by the Govt. on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1905. In September 1905 Rabindranath Tagore announced his plan for observing Rakhi Bandhan on 16<sup>th</sup> of October women also decided and observed "Non-Cooking" day. Women organized Swadeshi fairs and Sarla Devi Choudhurani opened "Lakshmir Bhandar" selling only indigenous articles, gave up use of foreign articles.

**Revolutionary Activities:-**

Women also took an active part in revolutionary movement. Women helped in distributing revolutionary pamphlets and Literature, Swadeshi Movement arose from Bengal and spread throughout Country. Mrs. Ramsay McDonald who accompanied her husband in his tour of India Visualized that the "Swadeshi Movement Could not have succeeded without the female assistance".

They are very much active in Dhaka, Comila and Chittagong. The famous group of women Revolutionaries Consisted of Kalpana Dutta, Suniti, Bina Das and Preetilata Waddedar. Preetilata Waddedar was a member of the Chittagong based Indian Republican Army; She was very much influenced by the revolutionary idea of Suryasen, died on September 24, 1932, after successfully leading a siege on the Pahartoli European Club in Chittagong. [3]

Rani Gaidineliu, Prominent Naga Nationalist from Manipur was very much active during the civil Disobedience Movement to oust the foreigner from Manipur. After Independence Shri Jawaharlal Nehru bestowed upon her title "Rani of Nagas".

Madam Bhikaji Kama unfurled the first National flag at the International Socialist conference in Stuttgart (Germany) in 1907, organized free India society and launched the Journal "Bande Mataram" to spread the revolutionary thought.

The swadeshi movement perhaps involed the most women who picketed foreign product when men were arrested the women stepped up fulfilled and finished their unfinished work. The most active women of central provinces like Avantika Bai Gokhle, Janki Bai Gore, Goda Bai Khare, Satyabhama Tilak set up an women's wing of "Abhinav Bharat" whose member secretly assisted the revolutionaries through this Institution. In 1917, Annie Besant became the first women president of the Congress. During her president ship a resolution was passed demanding equal voting for women.

**Advent of Mahatma Gandhi:-**

After arrival of Gandhiji in India and advent of him in Political scenario, the whole situation changed. Gandhiji was conscious of the female potentialities as passive resisters. Earlier Gandhiji extended his Co-operation to British Govt. But the issue of Rowlatt Act, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Khilafat question compelled him to follow the policy of Non-Co-Operation movement. It may be called the first mass movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Susheela Nair, Sucheta Kriplani, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali are some of the prominent ladies who participated in the Non-Violent Movement. Kasturba Gandhi women of Nehru family Kamla Nehru, Vijay Laxmi Pandit and Swarup Rani also participated. Lado Rani Zutshi and her daughter Manmohini Shyama and Janak, led the Movement in Lahore.

Gandhiji wrote in 1921 "I have great expectation from women. I want that they should make an equal Contribution for the attainment of Swara. At Gandhi's call women joined the congress and played an important role in taking forward and making it successful.

Bengal had become to occupy an important place in the freedom movement. Under the leadership of Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi and the Organizer of Nari Karmo Mandir Suniti Devi and several other women first time courted arrest by selling-Khadi and indulging in other illegal activities.

In south India women like Lila Bai Sangram, Muttu Lakshmi Reddy, who had been till then active in social field alone, then jumped into freedom struggle. During the time of Simon Commission boycott movement Annie Besant, Hansa Mehta with other women played an important role.

#### Civil Disobedience Movement:-

The civil Disobedience Movement was an important milestone in the history of Indian freedom struggle. Large scale participation of women was an important feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement. After Mahatma Gandhi Call thousands of women came out of their homes, they participated in protest Marches, manufactured salt and picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops, many were arrested. Sarojni Naidu ultimately had her way by joining Gandhiji on the last stretch to Dandi.

In Bombay large section of women of Gujrati Community was influenced by Gandhiji Idealism and participated in national movement. It should be noted that prior to 1930 only a few women mostly from the families of the leaders took part in political movement, but during the Satyagraha women increasingly enrolled themselves as volunteers.

In Karachi session, 1931 the Indian National Congress declared that in Independent India women would have complete political freedom and equality.

#### Quit India Movement & INA:-

The quit India resolution taken against British directly addressed women "as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom" required to sustain the flame of war. Gandhiji declared "I want freedom immediately this very night before dawn, it can be had, we shall free India or die in the attempt".

Usha Mehta a committed patriot setup a Radio transmitter called the "voice of freedom" to disseminate the mantra of freedom war. with majority of the men behind bars women took to the streets, raising slogans holding public lectures and demonstrations and even moving and transporting explosives. Women were also worst sufferers of British retaliation.

Aruna Asaf Ali, popularly known as the "Grand old Lady" of the Independence Movement she is known for hoisting the Indian flag at the Gwalia tank Maidan in Bombay during the Quit India Movement.

The long list of women who participated in the Quit India Movement. Some of whom who championed women's rights include...

Naidu, Rukmini Lakshmi, Maya Thomas, Sister Subbalakshmi. After Ten Years past Civil Disobedience Movement, more women came forward to participate because of the precedence in the past two decades.

Mahatma Gandhi remarked "When the history of India's fight for independence comes to be written, the sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place".

The Quit India Movement was followed by the Indian National Army lead by Subhas Chandra Bose and the Royal Indian Mutiny which further weakened foundation of the British empire in India's Captain Lakshmi Sehgal of Madras was associate commander of the INA's Rani Jhansi regiment numerous women took an active part in INA and other Movement. During this period women extended the discipline and sacrifice of their homes to the nation as a whole.

#### Conclusion:-

Women led from the front and emerged as a game changers in the quest of Independence. The role played by women in Indian freedom struggle, Crusaders not just helpers. Thousands of women dedicated their lives for obtaining freedom for their Motherland. Women shouldered critical responsibilities and bravely faced the baton of the police and went to jails. Uneducated and educated women sacrificed time and materials, volunteering, campaigning protesting, fasting and donating to cause of freedom. Women can be powerful actors for peace, security and prosperity. Women as messengers as supporters as wives and mothers and as leader's were an Integral part of the Independence Movement.

#### References:-

1. Time Line of India's Independence and Democracy from 1857 to 1947 [Public Atrocities Education Retried 2021.12.8
2. SHARMA (1978) Status and Condition of Women in the Holker State 1734-1948 Indian History Congress. ISSN 2249-1937.
3. Thapar -Bjokeret Suruchi 2006 Women in the Indian National Movement Page - 92
4. Chandra Bipin 1989 - India's struggle for Independence.
5. Role of women in India's freedom struggle - By V.Rajendra Raju.
6. Dr. R.K.Sharma, Nationalism, Social Reform and Indian Women, Janki Prakashan Patna
7. Anoop Taneja, Gandhi women and national movement 1920 - 1942, Delhi 1962.
8. Role of women in India's struggle for freedom. Review Siddhartha Das
9. Feminism and Nationalism in India 1917-1947 Aparna Basu.
10. Manmohan Kaur, Role of Women in freedom movement, sterling publishers, Delhi 1968
11. Role of women in Indian freedom struggle (1905-27) Dr. Rina Pal

□ □ □