

Women's Role in the History of the Indian Liberation Movement

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Abstract: Without acknowledging the role of women, the history of the Indian liberation movement would be lacking. The sacrifices made by Indian women will take center stage. The tales of women's bravery, dedication, and sacrifice abound in the history of the independence movement. The fact that hundreds of women fought alongside males is something that many of us forget. They fought with unwavering bravery and genuine passion. Indian women liberated themselves from a variety of constraints and conventional domestic duties and obligations. Therefore, it is simply amazing and commendable that women participated in the independence struggle and national awakening. However, in a culture where men predominate, it is difficult for women to fight as warriors. Even yet, women made an effort to alter the viewpoint of those traditionalists who believed that women should solely handle domestic duties. Furthermore, women fight against these problems in addition to giving their lives. This article aims to illustrate the history of women by showcasing their ferocious spirit. Rani Laxmi Bai was one of such ladies who battled against British rule by overcoming all obstacles.

Keywords: Indian, Women, Freedom movement, Role, Society

I. Introduction

Women's standing inside the nation was in a disadvantaged state before to independence. The main reason for this was the predominance of masculine domination. Women were primarily responsible for carrying out domestic duties; they were not permitted to take part in other work or activities or to voice their opinions. Several systems were implemented at this time that had negative consequences for women. These include the purdah system, sati, polygamy, female infanticide, female foeticide, child marriages, and restrictions on widows' ability to remarry. Many social reformers, like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Ishwar Chander Vidya Sagar, and Jyotiba Phule, faced many obstacles in their efforts to improve the status of women in Indian culture during the East India Company's era. There were a lot of women who were skilled in martial arts at this time. Rani Laxmi Bai battled for the nation's independence. Bhima Bai Holkar's battle against the British in early 1817 marked the beginning of women's involvement in India's independence movement. The first Indian woman socialist to fight for the independence of her nation during the 1857 revolt was Madam Bhikaji Cama. Without a doubt, a significant number of women participated in the Indian anti-imperialist movement.

Objectives

- To research the Indian freedom movement as a whole.
- To investigate the contribution that Indian women liberation fighters made to the cause.
- To raise awareness of various female liberation fighters.
- To demonstrate Indian women's social and economic freedom.
- To draw attention to Indian women's sacrifices and sorrows.

Research Methodology

The material used to produce this research was mostly focused on textual approaches; books and articles by distinguished scholars as well as papers published in a variety of national and international journals were taken into consideration for the study's framework. Therefore, this research was written using secondary data.

II. Review Of Literature

The following are some of the significant publications and articles on "Women's Role in the History of the Indian Liberation Movement," among other puranic works:

1. **Manmohan Kaur (1985):** This book discusses the 90-year period between 1857 and 1947, when Indian women fought for their independence. The first attempt at liberation was undertaken in 1857, and it ended in 1947.
2. **P. N. Chopra (1975):** This book describes the bravery, sacrifice, and selflessness of Indian women and emphasizes the heroic role they played in the country's fight for independence. They fought with unwavering bravery and genuine passion.

3. **Suruchi Thaper (2006):** Her contributions to the Indian liberation movement have been outstanding. The nationalist involvement of common middle-class women in India's independence struggle, particularly in the united provinces, is a major theme of this book. Prominent female leaders including Annie Besant, Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Sarojini Naidu, and Sucheta Kripalani are highlighted by the author.
4. **O.P. Ralhan (1995):** This book discusses the social and economic circumstances faced by Indian women, who have been crucial in the development of our civilization. The author also emphasizes the contributions made by Indian women from antiquity to the present. The current generation should be made aware of these women's significant contributions.
5. **M.G. Agarwal:** This multivolume sheds light on the part the freedom warriors played in the battle for independence. The book emphasizes the role that members of all societal groups had in the Indian liberation movement. This is an effort to tap into their memories of the fight for independence. In addition to providing information on women who participated in the independence struggle and made significant contributions in a variety of ways, efforts have been made to include freedom fighters from different places.
6. **Judith Brown (1972):** According to the book, women's involvement in the movement is a political annoyance.
7. **Tarachand:** It attempts to investigate how women function in society, how they view their own lives, the larger social reality, the origins, etc. In order to get over these issues, he also makes some attempts.

India's Freedom Struggle Milestones

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 congress; Meerut conspiracy case (1929)
6. Civil disobedience: The Dandi March (1930)
7. The Quit India Movement (1942)

Leaders Of The National Movement Who Are Women

Without a doubt, a significant number of women took part in the Indian anti-imperialist movement. The list of women leaders in our national movement is rather lengthy, if we were to recollect their names. We may start with national leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Rani Laxmi Bai, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Mridula Sarabhai and move on to provincial leaders like Annie Mascarenne and A.V. Kuttimalamma in Kerala, Durgabai Deshmukh in Madras Presidency, Rameshwari Nehru and Bi Amman in Uttar Pradesh, Satyawati Devi and Subhadra Joshi in Delhi, Hansa Mehta and Usha Mehta in Bombay, and a number of others. Because of the nature of our nationalist movement, it is really quite hard to tell leaders at the regional and national levels apart. Numerous women started at the local level before becoming prominent figures in the nationalist arena. Alongside all of these Indian women, there were also Irish women who had firsthand experience of British exploitation, such as Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins.

Women freedom fighter of India:

Listing all of the female freedom warriors is an extremely challenging endeavor, and choosing a select handful from the rest is much more challenging.

Sarojini Naidu: In 1917, she became a well-known Nationalist. In 1925, she became the second female president of INC. During the 1905 demonstration against Bengal's division, she became a member of the national movement. She was among the female demonstrators at the Dharsana salt plant during the Salt Satyagraha. She was imprisoned for her leadership in civil disobedience. She was taken into custody during the "Quit India movement" in 1942. She gave lectures on nationalist issues and women's empowerment while traveling around India. She also joined the women's voting rights delegation to London and was directly involved in the founding of the Women's India Association.

Rani Laxmi Bai: No female warrior as courageous and strong as Rani Laxmi Bai has ever existed in Indian history. She is a shining example of national pride and patriotism. Many individuals find inspiration and appreciation in her. As a result, her name appears in India's history in golden letters.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: She took part in the Salt Satyagraha in the 1930s. She supported theater, handicrafts, and handlooms. She received the Padma Bhushan in 1955 and the Padma Vibhushan in 1987 from the Indian government.

Annie Besant: In 1917, Annie Besant was elected as the Indian National Congress's first president. Her companion Margaret Cousins started the "Women's Indian Association" and wrote the law for Indian women's voting rights.

Vijayalakshmi Pandit: Mrs. Pandit was imprisoned three times in 1932, 1940, and 1942 for her patriotic actions. Together with her sister and her young kids, she organized processions and picketed stores that sold alcohol and foreign clothing during the Salt Satyagraha. She has broken several barriers and waged numerous fights for Indian women.

Deshmukh Durgabai: For her involvement in the Salt Satyagraha, she received a three-year jail sentence. Durgabai led a group of salt lawbreakers to Marina Beach in Madras during this Satyagraha, while leaders in the south, such as Rajaji and T. Prakasam, were engaged organizing other aspects of the campaign. At a very early age, she played a key role in the founding of the Andhra Mahila Sabha and the Hindi Balika Patasala.

Mridula Sarabai: She risked her life during the Partition to rescue females kidnapped by thugs and to stop the harm or death of both Muslim and Hindu refugees. She was chosen to represent Gujarat on the All Indian Congress Committee in 1934.

Basanti Das: During British control in India, Basanti Das was a fighter for Indian independence. She actively participated in a number of social and political activities. She was arrested during the non-cooperation movement and actively participated in liberation movements. In 1973, she was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Sucheta Kriplani: Sucheta Kriplani began working in the public sector in 1932 as a social worker. She joined the Indian National Congress in 1939. She offered individual satyagraha at Faizabad in 1940 and spent two years in jail. She went underground during the Quit India Movement and did an amazing job of covertly planning anti-British resistance.

Kamla Das Gupta: She has been a brilliant luminary among the Indian women freedom fighters. She belongs to the militant section and was an active member of the 'Jugantar Party'. In 1942, she was arrested in connection with the Quit-India movement and lodged in the Presidency jail.

Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy: She was the first Indian woman who for her merit and services in the field of social service and medicine was nominated to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1926. As a protest against torturing women and use of repressive measures against female agitators during Salt Satyagraha and Non-cooperation Movement, she resigned her offices and jumped into the freedom struggle.

Margaret Cousins: An Irish woman crusader, after fighting for the voting right for women in Ireland, arrived in India along with her husband and advocate the same causes for Indian women. She joined hand with Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu and helped in the founding of many women association to bring about an awakening among them.

Raj kumari Amrit Kaur: She belongs to the ruling house of Kapurthala. She was inspired by Gandhi and joined Congress during the Salt Satyagraha. She was arrested in Bombay for violating the Salt law, when she went to the North west frontier province to advocate the causes of freedom struggle, she was arrested and convicted on a charge of sedition. She was the President of All India Women conference for seven years.

Matangini Hazra: The martyr and freedom warrior Matangini Hazra, also known as the Gandhi Burhi (Gandhian elderly woman) of West Bengal, will live on in memory for her valiant deed. In 1932, she became a part of the liberation movement. She was imprisoned during the Salt Satyagraha. She successfully led a black flag protest in 1933 as the governor of Bengal addressed a crowd surrounded by police. This time, she was taken into custody and given a severe six-month prison term.

Indira Gandhi: One of the most remarkable women in modern India, Indira Gandhi joined the Indian National Congress in 1938. When India gained its independence in 1947, she assumed responsibility for the Prime Minister's residence and began her tireless efforts to advance the social and economic status of minorities. She fought fearlessly and vehemently against communalism, revivalism, and religious fundamentalism of all kinds, and she became the unwavering symbol of India's self-confidence.

Women's Association

The early 20th century also witnessed the emergence of many city and town-based women associations:

- Rabindranath Tagore and Sarla Devi's nieces founded women's organizations like the Mahila Shilpa Samiti and Lakshmir Bhandar in response to the Swadeshi agitation. In 1907, a women's organization called the Hitashini Sabha arranged a display of Swadeshi merchandise.
- Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, in her autobiography title Inner recesses, outer spaces, describe how in her hometown Mangalore, her own mother Girijabai set up a mahila sabha around 1911 to bring women together to discuss their problems and seek ways of resolving them.
- Rameshwari Nehru had also set up a women's journal at this time: The Stree Darpan, which was extremely popular. It had an interesting mix of political coverage of national and international issues.
- Women's journal like the Bharat Mahila were also becoming extremely popular which was related to women issues.
- An outstanding women's organization in Gujarat, Jyoti Sangh, women conference (AIWC) was also established in 1927.

Mobilization of Women in Gandhian phase:

Gandhi was without a doubt the most revered and genuine embodiment of Indian culture and knowledge in our day. He is reverently referred to as the mahatma by his fellow citizens. He was an economist, a political philosopher, a social reformer, and a truth-seeker. He turned the national movement into a mass movement and the Indian National Congress into a people's congress. He taught people how to oppose injustice without using violence and gave them courage and bravery. Since he led the fight for Indian independence alone, Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as having played the most important role in the country's liberation war. Gandhi's nonviolent and peaceful methods served as the cornerstone of the fight for liberation from the British. Between 1918 and 1922, the Indian independence movement reached its peak. Gandhi was the leader of the INC, which started a series of nonviolent civil disobedience campaigns. The primary goal was to undermine the British administration by refusing to cooperate. Gandhi says that full freedom of India is not possible unless our daughters stand side by side with the sons in the battle for freedom and this requires them to realize their own power.

Women under Gandhian Leadership:

- Gandhi had empowered and inspired women by waging a battle against caste, discrimination, child marriages and encouraging women education. They motivate the women to participate in huge numbers.
- Non-cooperation movement witness unprecedented women activism, specially of the educate and middle classes. Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf, Sarla Devi and Muthul Laxmi Reddy emerged as prominent leader.
- During the civil disobedient movement Sarojini Naidu inspired by Gandhian ideals led a peaceful protest at Dharsana Salt works against the Salt law, taxes even after the arrest of Gandhi. She fought for voting right and was elected as first Indian women president of Indian National Congress.
- In Quit India movement the underground activism led by Usha Mehta, Aruna Asaf Ali was crucial in sustaining the movement.
- Mostly women participate in political scenario in 1920. During this period large number of women came forward.

Thus, by breaking the barriers of socio-economic oppression Indian women have come together to realize the potential of collective action and laid the seats for women empowerment in Independent India.

III. Conclusion

The tale of women's involvement in the Indian liberation movement is one of brave decisions, ending up on the streets, in prison, and in the legislature. On August 15, 1947, India gained its independence after a great deal of work. Thousands of Indian women gave their lives to secure their country's independence. Women not only accompanied the nonviolent campaign that led to India's independence, but their active involvement was essential to its success. Perhaps for the first and only time in history, the moral might of a people equipped only with peace, ideals, and bravery had challenged and triumphed over the might of a powerful global empire that the sun never set on. Ultimately, we can conclude that the women's movement has grown over the past fifty years and has gradually strengthened its ties to other movements, such as labor unions, environmental organizations, and other progressive movements against injustice and degradation.

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