

Role of Women in The Quit India Movement

Abstract

The present work is an attempt to evaluate the role of women in the Quit India Movement 1942. Women, from time immemorial, have eagerly taken part in political, social and cultural affairs as and when they were required to do so. They as a force played a very crucial role in the India's freedom struggle. The Quit India Movement of 1942, which was a spontaneous mass uprising witnessed the women at its fore front. During this movement, the women activists challenged the norms that obsessed an earlier generation of women leaders to fulfil their roles as the freedom fighters. Women during this movement boldly led processions, picketed liquor shops and fearlessly faced the British Raj's repressions without fearing about their personal well-being. Thus, the brave Women of India created history by making their contribution in the efforts leading to the freedom of their mother land.

Keywords: Evaluate Women, Quit India, Movement, Crucial, Freedom Struggle, Spontaneous, Mass Uprising

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi once said "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."

More than 77 years have passed since Quit India Movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi on the 8th of August in 1942 at the All-India Congress Committee session in Bombay. On the very next day, Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and many other leaders of the Indian National Congress were arrested by the British Government. This led to Massive demonstrations throughout the country in the following days. The Quit India movement of 1942 or 'August Revolution' of 1942 was the most popular and powerful mass movement in the series of agitations led by Gandhiji in the course of freedom struggle. However, the significance of the 'Quit India movement' lay in the broadening of his support base to include peasants, students and the lower middle class in the freedom struggle.

Aim of the Study

To Study The Role of Women In The Quit India Movement of 1942. The Focus of the Study will stress upon the brave endeavours of the Women Freedom fighters during the Quit India Movement.

Methodology

The present work follows descriptive and analytical method from a gender perspective. It also uses sociological approach for wider understanding of the subject matter. The present article involves a critical use of both primary and secondary sources based on external and internal criticism.

Discussion

An aspect of the movement that is rarely spoken about is the way it encouraged women to come out of the shackles of their homes and raise their voice against the British rule. Women's participation in the Indian freedom struggle added effectiveness to the Indian freedom struggle. Their active participation not only changed their goals but also organized the activities to take equal responsibilities as their fellow male countrymen. The political participation of women was equally approved and appreciated by men who otherwise want them to be perfect wives at home. The participation of women in the Quit India Movement of 1942 was significant from several aspects. The women of India, at large, were endowed with a new spirit on the call of Gandhiji's "Do or die". A 'leaderless movement' and with majority of the men behind bars, women took to the streets, raising slogans, holding public lectures and demonstrations and even making and transporting explosives. Women were active throughout the movement



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There was direct involvement of women in the extremist activities. Huge numbers of women martyrs were listed in this movement. The struggle for India's independence introduced Indian women to a new kind of liberation movement. This instilled in them a sense of responsibility and dedication towards one's own country. The role played by the women folk in the Quit India Movement of 1942 is a story of devotion, sacrifice and patriotism and it will go down in history as the most remarkable contribution towards the attainment of swaraj.

There were a large number of women participants in this movement but the important contribution of few of them is worth mentioning.

Aruna Asaf Ali

Aruna Asaf Ali was born in 1909 in the undivided Punjab to Shri Upendra Nath Ganguly and Ambalika Devi. They belonged to a Bengali Brahmo family. After completion of her education she started teaching at a school in Calcutta. She married Asaf Ali, a well-known leader of the Indian National Congress. After her marriage she also took active participation in Congress and its activities related to the freedom struggle. She took active part in the Salt Satyagraha and was jailed on various occasions during the struggle for independence. On 9th of August, 1942 She hoisted the Indian flag at the Gowalia Tank Grounds in Bombay. While serving the jail term given to her by the British Raj, she took a number of initiatives to improve the conditions of the jailed inmates.

After independence she took up various roles as a politician and as a social activist. She continued her efforts to help the Women of India. She took a number of initiatives to embolden the Indian Women.

Sucheta Kriplani

Sucheta Kriplani was born and brought up in undivided Punjab. From her childhood, she was very shy in nature. But at her heart she was a true patriot. She could never resist if anyone would talk anything bad about her country or her religion. She completed her master's degree in History. After completion of her education she joined the Banaras Hindi University and married Acharya J.B. Kriplani. During the Quit India Movement of 1942, she played a very pivotal role like Aruna Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta. After India's Independence She became a member of the Constituent Assembly.

Usha Mehta

Usha Mehta was born in Gujarat and spent her early childhood in Gujarat as well. After the retirement of her father who was a judge during British Raj, they moved and settled in Bombay. Since, her childhood Usha Mehta was very much inspired by Gandhiji and his simple way of life. She always wanted to do something to help her motherland India to get freedom from the British Rule. After the arrest of all the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress in 1942, the Quit India Movement became leaderless.

To fill this vacuum and rise to the occasion the new leaders like Usha Mehta came up in the forefront. Usha Mehta started a Congress Radio Station aired from Bombay. Through this Radio station the messages of the prominent Congress leaders, who were jailed, were aired amongst the people of India. But soon after Usha Mehta along with others was captured and sentenced to a jail term of about four years by the British. She faced this jail term with utmost courage and after her release in 1946, she continued to indulge herself in various welfare activities to help the poor and the needy.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was born in 1889 to Raja Harnam Singh of the Kapurthala state in the Punjab region. She completed her education in England and returned to India. Her father Raja Harnam Singh had very friendly and cordial relations with the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress. She was very much influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, which inspired her to join the Indian National Congress. In 1919 the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre by the British greatly moved Rajkumari Amrit kaur. Immediately she decided to take part in the freedom struggle to secure independence for the country from the coercive British Raj. Thereby, She participated in a number of movements including the Dandi March of 1930 and the Quit India Movement of 1942.

After India's independence, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur became the first Health minister in the Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet. She took up a number of initiatives to eradicate the poor especially the Women. She also took a number of initiatives to improve the education system of India. While she was the health minister, She laid the foundation of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences at Delhi. She was a founder-member of the All India Women's Conference. She also served as a member of the Indian Red Cross.

Conclusion

Thus, many prominent women played leading role in the freedom movement yet not all of them were given much space on the pages of history, but without these women getting freedom was impossible. Women once enjoyed considerable freedom and privileges in the spheres of family, religion and public life; but as centuries rolled on, the situation went on changing adversely. Whatever that may be the Indian women during the nationalist movement continued this tradition, burdens of tears and toils of the long years of struggle were borne by women sometimes as wives, sometimes as mothers and sometimes as daughters as cheerfully. The program of self-imposed poverty and periodical jail going was possible only because of the willing cooperation of the family women. In the resistance movements in the villages the illiterate women played passive but contributory part as comrade to their men folk.

The Quit India Movement opened a new vista for Indian women. They got introduced to a new kind of liberalism and social status which was

unknown to them before. Quit India Movement drew the largest number of women to the forefront. It was a struggle substantially waged by the womanhood. The arrest of the important leaders and the other male workers going underground, the woman took charge of the situation and carried on the movement by bearing the wrath of The British Raj. India has produced great women throughout her long political, social and cultural history. Therefore, ran their historic and heroic saga of winning freedom for their mother land as well as for themselves.

This Revolt of 1942 had given utterance to India's anger against imperialism and her determination to be free, in a striking and unmistakable manner; it was a living testament to the white hot intensity nationalist feelings had reached and the limits to which the people were prepared to suffer and sacrifice in exercise of their right to be free. Also, after the Revolt of 1942, there could have been no doubt left in the minds of the British rulers that the days of imperialist domination of India were strictly numbered.

Conclusion

In one sense the Revolt of 1942 marked the culmination of the Indian Freedom Movement. After the August 1942 uprising, it was only a question of time and determining the actual mechanics of the transfer of power and pattern of Government the country was to have after Independence. There was no doubt many political developments and much parleying and bargaining between the 1942 Revolt

and the actual coming of independence in 1947. But that the freedom struggle was bound to win was no longer in doubt after this great movement of 1942.

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