

Participation of Women in Indian Freedom Movement and Social Reforms

Abstract

This paper throws light on the Indian women who actively participated in Indian national movement and Social reforms. It is true that History of Indian freedom movement would not be complete if we do not study the participation of women in Indian national movement and women participation in 1857 revolt. Many women like Laxmi Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Jhalkari Bai, Uda Devi, Awanti Bai etc played vital role in 1857 revolt. Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Kasturba Gandhi, Usha Mehta, Aruna Asaf Ali, Duraga Bhabhi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay etc participated in Indian national movement in 20th century whereas there were many women who actively contributed in upliftment of society.

Keywords: Add some keywords and Aim of the Study here.

Introduction

India's struggle for independence is very important anti colonial movement. In this movement we find mass participation of Indian women and significance of the contribution of women in the independence movement.

Maharani Velu Nachiyar (1730-96) is the only female queen in Bharat to defeat and remain undefeated. Perhaps she is only one of the world to defeat the western power and remained undefeated.

She also formed women army "Udhiyaal" She regained her kingdom and ruled for 10 more years.

Review of Literature

Suruchi Thaper (2006)- This book examines the participation of north Indian women in national movement and how their life was affected when they joined the national movement. The author also discusses how Indian women participated in the mass movement and also focused on the nationalist participation of ordinary middle-class women in India's freedom movement and explore known women who made sacrifice for the freedom.

Manraj Singh (2014)- This article deals with the Indian women's contribution in freedom movement. It also examines the women participation in Punjab from 1901-1947. Jalianwala Bagh tragedy and other incidents made political consciousness among the Indian women for participating in freedom movement and they joined the non-cooperation movement in 1920. Women also took part in satyagrah and civil and quit India movements.

Anup Taneja (2005)- This book critically analyzes the women participation in national movement. It also discusses position of women in Indian society, social reforms and awakening of women's consciousness. Women participation in non-cooperation movement, Bardoli satyagrah, quit India movement and Indian national Army.

Annie Besant - In this book author discusses Annie Besant's contribution in national movement. She was the president of Theosophical society and founder of Home rule league. The first woman president of Indian National Congress. Annie Besant was a social reformer, political leader, women rights activist. She fought for the rights of India people.

Namrata Singh (2015)- In her articles she discusses about the Indian society. In the period of Indian National Movement has seen rise of Indian women to fight for the country's freedom. The participation of women in Indian national movement grew to much extent during non-cooperation movement under Gandhiji. Their participation changed their dimension as they become more independent. And they actively participated in Indian national movement and Indian political system. Thus national movement played crucial role in shaping up the personality of women of independent India.



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Indian society is based on extremes of Patriarchy System. Indian or Hindu society women is on conflicting position on one side She is worshipped like goddesses and they are ultimate source of strength, wealth and wisdom. Traditional history of national movements have largely written by male from male perspective .so the women participation in national movement is not mentioned in history. only few women found their place in national movements .

In the nineteenth century the liberal reformer like Raja Ram Mohan, Ishwar chand vidhya sagar Etc brought change in status of women and did valuable work for the development of women in India.

Education gave women their first experience with public work . In 1920 Non Missionaries School for girls were set up. Vernacular school played more important role in girls Education. Women received formal Education and they become conscious of their Rights to improve their situation .

All India conference on Education and social reform was held in Poona in Jan 1927 ,Which setup All India women Education fund in 1929 with the view to promote girls and women education in India .By End of the 19th century women started to make their association and were talking about their social and political Rights

Women participated in National movement not only in big cities but also in small towns and villages.Of course not only elite women participated but middle class and lower class women also participated in mass level.

Women's participation in India 's freedom struggle as early as in 1817.

Bhima Bai Hokkar

She fought against the British colonel Malcom and defeated him in gureilla war.

Velu Nchiar:(1730-1796)

Queen of Sivaganga Estate is the first south Indian queen fought for freedom against British in India. And first revolutionary to oppose British rule even before the great rebellion of 1857.Legand has it that the British never come back to conquer her Kingdom while She ruled

Kittur Rani Chennamma:(1778-1829)

Who fought to save state of Kittur frim British after death of her husband. She was a Female warrior led an arm rebellion against the British East India Company in 1824.

The vital role played by the women in the war of Independence of 1857.

Azizun Bai

During the uprising of 1857,she formed her own group of women to support the revolt.

Jhalkari Bai

Marking the participation of Dalit women Viraganas in Indian rebellion .She led Duraga Dal the women Brigade, of Jhansi.she was skilled in archery and swordplay. Rani of Ramgarh also participated in1857 revolt.

Uda Devi

She was a warrior-One of the battle in Sikandar Bagh in November 1897 .A story goes that he British commander heard a crack shot which was fired from the top of a tree .when they managed to fell

the tree than they came to know the person shooting was woman,who was Uda Devi from the pasi community.

Rani Avantibai:(1800-1858)

She was the queen of Lodhis and freedom fighter .She fought against British during 1887 for the independence. Rani Draupadi of Dhar also fought against Britishers.

Rani Laxmi Bai- (1858-1922)

One of the forerunner of India's freedom struggle for freedom who became the legendary figure in the History of national movement.She was the symbol of bravery Patriotism and self respect.She fought against British rule till her last breath.

Begum Hazrat Mahal of Awadh (1820-1879)

She played a major role during India's first war of Independence (1887-58).after the death of her Husband Mahal took charge of affairs of Awadh . she rebelled against. the British in 1857 .she was able to take control of Lucknow .British again won the Awadh state .she went to Nepal where she died in 1979.

Some other women participated in 1887 as a messenger of rebellion group .many Kothas were meeting points for the rebels. The Muzaffarnagar area in westen U.P.saw the active participation of women .Some names of women rebels are Asha Devi ,Bakhtavari ,Habiba ,Bhagavati Devi Tyagi Indra kaur ,Jamila Khan Ect.they actively participated in Independence war.

Women participated in Indian national movement in 20th century

Annie Besant (1847-1933)

She was an Irish leady. She actively participated in Indian National movement ,and was the leader of theosophical Society.She advocated emancipation of Indian women. She considered the child marriage to be a social evil and wanted to remove it from Indian society. and also supported the remarriage of young widows and women education.she joined the Indian National Congress and became first women President of Indian National Congress.She fought for the rights of Indian women.

Aruna Asaf Ali

She actively participated in National movement and Salt Satyagrah and Quit India movement. In 1942 she hosted the Indian Flag at the August Kranti Maidan.

Duraga Bhabhi (1907-1999)

She was a Revolutionary freedom fighter .She helped Bhagat Singh escape from British after Saunder's killing. She was very brave and wise woman.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay :(1903-1988)

she was an Indian social reformer and freedom fighter .she worked for the upliftment of social economic condition of Indian women. In 1923 she joined the Seva Dal a Gagdihan organization .In 1926 she met the Suffragette Margaret E. Cousins the founder of All India Women Conference (AIWC).She ran for the Madras Provincial Legislative Assembly .Thus she became first women to run for legislative seat in India. In 1930 she actively participated in Salt movement .after Independence she worked for the development of Indian handi craft and Art and Culture.

Usha Mehta:(1920-2000) – she participated in Indian National Movement and was jailed for Six months for hosting a secret radio show which provided information to various leaders who participated in Indian National movement.

Kasturba Gandhi

Indian Political activist who was the leader in the struggle for civil rights and for independence from British rule in India .she was the wife of M.K.Gandhi.

Her political participation began in 1904, she took part in protest against the ill-treatment of Indian immigrants in south Africa, for which She was arrested. In 1917 Kasturba worked for the welfare of women in Champaran in Bihar. She also participated in non cooperation movement, civil Disobedience movement, and Quit India movement .she played active role in Bardoli satyagraha of 1923-24 .Bardoli had set a new examples as it was the first time the rural women participated in freedom Struggle.

Sarojini Naidu

She worked as an active Politician and freed fighter .In August 1914 she met Mahatma Gandhi, and from then on wards devoted her energy to the freedom movement . in 1917 she led the delegation to meet Mr.Montagu for women's suffrage. In 1918 She had a resolution passed at the congress session in Bombay ,supporting women franchise .She became a campaigner for women satyagrah, traveling all over India .she actively participated in non cooperation movement in 1920. she also joined the civil disobedience movement in 1930

Kamla Nehru

In 1921 She organized group of women in Allahabad and propagated use of khadi clothes.

Vijay Laxmi Pandit

She took active participation in national movement. She was greatly influenced by M.K.Gandhi and joined struggle for independence .she was imprisoned by the British in 1932, 1933, 1940 and 1942 -1943. She was the first woman to hold a cabinet post in pre -independent India .she was elected to Provincial legislature of the United Provinces .In 1946 She was elected to the constituent Assembly from United Provinces.

Laxmi Sahagal:(1914-2012)

She was also known as revolutionary freedom fighter ,joined the Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army .She was a senior leader in the Indian National Army.

Madam Bhikaiji Cama (1861-1936)

Bhikaiji Kama an iconic figure for Indian youth abroad started Free India society .Freedom fighter and Prominent leader in the independence movement in India. In 1936 she designed "Flag of Indian Independence" raised by Cama on 22 Aug. 1907 ,at the International Conference in Stuttgart, Germany.

Matangini Hazara :(1870-1942)

Indian revolutionary freedom fighter She participated in various movements organization for complete freedom. She was shot dead by British police in 1942.

Some women who played active role in social Reform and awakening of Indian women.

Pandita Rama Bai

She is remembered as the maker of modern India a learned scholar and exponent of Sanskrit she was given the title of Pandita . she worked against the social injustice. She travelled to U.S.A. and England to pursue Professional aspiration .She married cross culturally and converted to Christianity returned to India ,she worked for women education and their upliftment in the society. She particularly worked for widows women For fulfillment of the objective she founded Mahila Samaj and Seva Sadan.

In Bengal Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain worked for muslim women;s upliftment.

Savitri Bai Phule (1831-1897)

With the help of her husband Mahatma Jyoti Phule She played an Important role in improving the condition of women .She emphasized on women Rights in India .She was First Female teacher of the first women's school in poona .

Tara Bai Shinde

She was the feminist Activist. Circumventing all hurdles Kadambini ganguli, Chadramuki Basu became the first female graduates of the British empire from Calcutta university .

Kadambini, Hamavati Sen Anandibai became medical Doctors. they all also became the social reformer of Indian Society.

Swarnakumari Ghoshal established the saki samiti (1886) to promote traditional handicrafts .

Chandramukhi Basu

India's First Female Graduate(1860-1944)- she was one if the female graduate of the British empire in 1882 along with Kadambini Ganguli. she opened the path for Indian girls to get higher Education.

Abala Bose (1865-1951)

She worked for the advancement of women's education .and her contribution to improve the condition of widows in India. She set up "Nari Shiksha Samiti" Whose mission was to educate girls and women. She also opened a home for widows and rehabilitation center for women.

Cornelia Sorabji

First Female Lawyer (1866-1954) first woman to study at oxford and first female Advocate in India .she participated in women's suffrage movement in Britain .After returning in India she helped many Indian women in Legal matters.

Anandi Gopal Joshi

First Female Doctor (1865-1887)-She obtained her medical degree from United States. she died at the age of just 21. But she inspired many young women who wanted to do more in education field.

Begum Rokeya (1890-1932)

She was a bangali Feminist thinker and educator, she was known as a Pioneer of women's liberation in south Asia. She advocated that women and men to be treated equally. in all ground /as rational being .

Anasuya SaraBhi

Social Worker and Trade Union Leader (1885-1972)-She completed her higher education from London School of Economics .She helped Indian

Women by Advocating for labour Rights. She founded the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association and in 1920 she became first leader of a trade Union in India.

Ismat Chugthai (1915-1991)

She was known as the first Urdu feminist writer who wrote on femininity and women's rights .

Conclusion

Indian women participated in national freedom movement against East India Company before the first war of Independence(1857-58). They also contributed in 1857 revolt and also had active role in freedom struggle of 1920-1947. When most of the male freedom fighters were in prison then the women took charge of the struggle .Despite their role in freedom struggle they did not get deserved reorganization in Indian history .Hence we should not forget their contribution for our country.

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