
Ghandian Phase: Mahila-Samitis and the Role of Women in the Indian National Movement

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Abstract: If the contribution of women to the Indian National Movement is not acknowledged, the struggle will lose its significance. The sacrifices made by the women of the Indian national movement take precedence. The story of sacrifice, selflessness, and bravery of women abounds in the era of freedom struggle. Many of us had no idea that hundreds of women fought alongside their male comrades in the Second World War. With unflinching bravery and passion, they battled until the end. Indian women broke free from a variety of social constraints and distanced themselves from the traditional roles and responsibilities associated with the home. Consequently, the role that women played in the American Revolution and in the awaking of the country was amazing and inspirational. Nevertheless, in communities where males are the majority, women sometimes find it difficult to engage in combat as warriors. Despite the fact that there were efforts made by women to change the perceptions of more traditional people who held the view that women were only meant to do housework, these people continued to hold this view. In addition, women not only sacrifice their lives but also engage in the struggle against these problems. The purpose of this study is to investigate women's mobilisation during the Ghandian Phase, as well as the significance of Mahila-Samities and their role in the Indian National Movement.

Keywords: *Indian, Women, Freedom Movement, Role, Society.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Prior to the country's independence, women's rights were severely restricted. Male dominance was the primary cause of this. Wives could not participate in any other activities or express their opinions, and they were not allowed to participate in any other tasks or activities. Several systems were put in place at this time that were harmful to women. The purdah system, sati, polygamy, widow remarriage restrictions, female infanticide, female feticide, and restrictions on widow remarriage are just a few examples. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Jyotiba Phule, and Ishwar Chander Vidya Sagar encountered various obstacles while attempting to improve the position of women in Indian society during the East India Company era. During this time period, a large number of female martial artists

were trained. He fought for India's independence, Rani Laxmi Bai.¹ Among the first women who fought for India's independence was Bhima Bai Holkar. Madam Bhikaji Cama, the first Indian woman socialist, fought for her country's independence following the uprising of 1857. In India's anti-imperialist struggle, women play an important role.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to explore the Mobilization of Women and their position in Gandhian phase.

2. METHODOLOGY

“This study is a type of archival or primary research which involves diverse evidence from Indian archival records. It has been hunted through the 35 of documents relevant to the types of revolution and role of women in the different periods of history. This study lies at the heart of academic and other forms of original historical studies. It also focused on the different types of revolutionary activities in the analytical point of view. Accordingly, the data are of library type and the method is analytical”.

SOME IMPORTANT WOMEN LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

There is no getting around the undeniable fact that women played a significant part in the resistance movement that took place in India. The following is a list of some of the most influential female leaders in our country, all of whom have made significant contributions to our national movement.² “At the national level, we may start with Sarojini Naidu, Rani Laxmi Bai, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Mridula Sarabhai. We may then go on to leaders at the provincial level, such as Annie Mascarene and A.V.³ Kuttimaluamma in Kerala, or Durgabai Deshmukh in the Madras Presidency, for example.”⁴ In point of fact, the characteristics of our nationalist movement make it extremely challenging to differentiate between leaders who represent specific regions and those who represent all of India. A great number of women started their careers in politics at the local level, and then worked their way up to the nationalist centre stage.⁵ Irish women like as Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins, in addition to these Indian women, shared their own stories of British exploitation in Ireland to help inform the conversation about Indian women's rights. They did this in an effort to help improve conditions there.

Mahila-samitis (Women’s Association):

Several municipal and town-based women's organisations arose in the early twentieth century:

- The nieces of Rabindranath Tagore and Sarla Devi founded women's associations such as the Mahila Shilpa Samiti and the Lakshmir Bhandar in response to the Swadeshi agitation. In the year 1907, a women's organisation known as the Hitashini Sabha put on an exhibition of Swadeshi goods.⁷
- Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya's autobiography, "Inner recesses, outside expanses," relates how her mother Girijabai formed a mahila sabha in Mangalore about 1911. Mahalakshmi was meant to bring women together in order to talk and find answers to their problems.⁸
- In addition, during this time period, Rameshwari Nehru established a publication for

women called The Stree Darpan, which attained a great deal of notoriety. It featured a unique combination of political coverage of local, state, national, and even international issues.

- Additionally gaining a significant amount of readership at the time was content that was published in women's journals such as Bharat Mahila.⁹
- Jyoti Sangh, women conference (AIWC), a renowned Gujarati women's organisation, was also founded in 1927.¹⁰

Mobilization of Women in Gandhian phase:

Without a doubt, Gandhi was the most genuine and revered figure to ever represent India's intellectual tradition and rich cultural heritage. He is revered and referred to as the Mahatma by his followers. He was someone who sought the truth, worked to improve society, was an economist, and a political philosopher. Because of him, the Indian National Congress transformed into a congress of the people, and the national movement evolved into a movement of the masses. He gave people the confidence to stand up against injustice without resorting to violence, and he taught them how to do so. Because he was the sole leader of the independence movement in India, Mahatma Gandhi is generally regarded as having made the most significant contribution to the Indian freedom struggle.¹¹ Techniques of nonviolence and nonviolence advocated by Gandhi served as the cornerstone of the freedom movement's fight against the British. The Indian independence movement reached its zenith between the years 1918 and 1922, when it reached its highest point. Campaigns of nonviolent civil disobedience were initiated by the Indian National Congress (INC), which was led by Gandhi. The primary objective was to weaken the authority of the British government through the refusal to cooperate. According to Gandhi, complete independence for India will not be possible until our daughters recognise their own power and join our sons in the struggle for independence. This means that our daughters must fight alongside our sons in the struggle for independence.

Women under Gandhian leadership:

Gandhi had given women the ability to make their own decisions and inspired them through his fight against caste, discrimination, and child marriages as well as his promotion of women's education. All of the female participants are enthused and motivated by them. Many women, particularly those from the upper and middle classes, have been involved in the non-cooperation movement. Muthulaxmi Reddy and Amrit Kaur emerged as the most important leaders. Dharsana Salt factory owner Sarojini Naidu, who was motivated by Gandhian ideas, organised a nonviolent protest against a legislation and tax on salt during the era of civil disobedience movement. This protest took place even after Gandhi was arrested. She fought for the right to vote, and ultimately became the first Indian woman to be elected president of the Indian National Congress. Underground activism during the Quit India movement, led by people like Usha Mehta and Aruna Asaf Ali, played an important role in keeping the movement alive.

In the year 1920, women make up the majority of political participants. In the course of this time period, a significant number of women came forward.

Women in India have joined together to realise the possibilities of collective action and have built the framework for women's empowerment in the independent nation of India by fighting socioeconomic injustice.



3. CONCLUSION

Women in India who took part in the country's independence movement often found themselves on the run, in jail, or elected to positions of power as a result of their actions. After a protracted period of struggle, India attained its independence on August 15, 1947. The attainment of independence for their homeland required the sacrifice of the lives of thousands of Indian women. Women played an integral part not only in the nonviolent movement that led to India's independence but also in the success of that movement, which was dependent on their active participation. A people armed only with peace, ideals, and bravery had battled and conquered the might of a vast global empire where the sun never set. This may have been the first and only time this has ever happened in the history of the world. In conclusion, we can state that the women's movement has evolved and matured in its interaction with other movements such as labour unions, environmental organisations, and other progressive groups that combat oppression, injustice, and degradation throughout the previous half-century. Specifically, we can say that this relationship has deepened.

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