

# Role Of Women in The Independence Movement with Special Reference to Karnataka

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*Abstract— The history of freedom struggle is incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women. Apart from constituting 50% of the population, women as a community played a significant role in the freedom struggle of the country. They demonstrated the true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitations and hardships to earn us freedom, which we are enjoying today. When most of the men freedom fighters were captivated and sent to prison, the women came forward and took charge of the freedom struggle. Even much before, the spark of freedom struggle for independence was ignited, we have instances of women, who fought bravely against Britishers' and made them face tough opposition and taste failure. Bhima Bai Holkar fought bravely against the British colonel by name 'Malcolm' and defeated him in Guerilla warfare. Rani Channamma of Kittur, popularly known as Kitturu Rani Chennamma, Rani Begam Hazrat Mahal of Avadh fought against British East India Company in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; three decades before the "First War of Independence 1857" or 'Sepoy Mutiny' could begin in the country. The role played by women in the first war of independence was of course creditable and invited the admiration even from Britishers. Rani of Ramgarh, Rani Jindan Kaur, Rani Tace Bai, Baiza Bai, Chauban Rani and Tapasvini Maharani daringly led their troops into the battlefield. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, whose heroism and superb leadership laid an outstanding example of real patriotism. Indian women who joined the national movement comprised of both educated and those who are primarily from liberal families, as well as those from the rural areas and from all walk of life, all castes, religions and communities. Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijayalakshmi Pundit and Annie Besant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are remembered even today for their singular contribution both in battlefield and in political field. The list of great women who are known for their dedication and undying devotion to the service of the country is definitely a long one and must be compulsorily taught to every child and adult in school and in their college curriculum. It is very unfortunate that, many of these great leaders names are forgotten or not being remembered at all.*

*Index Terms- Women, Freedom Struggle, Sacrifices, Spirit, Bravery.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the freedom movement is of special nature in Karnataka. Women participated very actively and sacrificed their lives for the cause of their motherland. Queen Channamma of Kittur started an era of revolt against the British in India. It is a matter of great pride to note that the first ever call for revolt against the mighty power of the British was given by a woman, Queen of a small state in Karnataka, namely, Kittur, which occupied then a strategic place from both political and military points of view. She is one of the greatest among the freedom fighters not only of Karnataka but also of the whole world. It must be highlighted that, Queen Channamma once defeated a British force and killed Thackeray. In the second encounter with the British army, she was defeated. Thus Queen Channamma of Kittur started an era of revolt successfully in Karnataka. Belawadi Mallamma of the Swadi dynasty, Abbakka, Queen of Ullal kingdom of South Kanara district, Keladi Rani Channamma and Rani Veeramma of Keladi dynasty are the names of few women rulers who demonstrated their heroism as queens and fought for independence of their territories. Gandhiji's visit to Belgaum in 1924 left everlasting impression upon the freedom fighters. Millions of women participated in individual Satyagraha, salt Satyagraha and No Tax Campaign and thereby Gandhian era of independence started in the state. Women freedom fighters along with men fought for socio-economic values and to popularize democratic ideas. Freedom movement was started not merely to drive the Britishers out of India, but the struggle continued to gain recognition for our nation among the other advanced nations of the world.

Karnataka State has contributed a lot in the freedom struggle. Kannadigas are very well known for bravery and courage. They have believed and continue to believe that freedom is more valuable than their life. The sacrifice made by women is a special feature and

culture of Karnataka. One can remember Attimabbe of 10<sup>th</sup> century, Akka Mahadevi of 12<sup>th</sup> century, Gangambika of Vijayanager, Onake Obavva have set examples many centuries before the actual fire of freedom struggle could start in the country. People of the state, have responded positively to the political awakening and participated actively in the freedom movement. Belgaum, Dharwad, Karwar and Bijapur districts known as Bombay Karnataka, formed the Southern part of the Bombay presidency. As part of the Bombay presidency, these four districts were considerably influenced by the political awakening in that presidency, which was administered by the British. Mysore was an enlightened princely state and responded in its own way to this national call. Gulbarga, Raichur and Bidar districts formed part of Nizam's State. No one could do anything about Nizam's rule till late in the forties. After independence, however, by police action it was incorporated into the Indian Union. The Coastal South Kanara (Dakshina Kannada) and inland Bellary districts were in the Madras presidency. They were so far apart, that there was no contiguity between the two districts. Coorg, though contiguous with Mysore, was entirely cut off from other parts of Karnataka. So far as political activity was concerned, it was administered by the Government of India through a Chief Commissioner. Half of Karnataka area was under the rule of Indian princes. Besides Mysore and the Kannada Districts in the Nizam's state, there were nearly a dozen small princely states like Sondur, Savanuru, Ramadurg, Jamakhandi, Mudhola, and Akkalkot. These princely states which were separate and independent administrations were surrounded on all sides by British Indian provinces. These territories came under the influence of political agitation and up heal that came from the British administered territories. It was only natural that the people of these states shared the political aspirations for freedom and democracy of their fellow citizens living across their borders. The political upsurge in British India could not, therefore, leave the people of princely states unaffected.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Women and Gandhi", book highlights All India Women's Movements documents. This book deals with full and systematic account not only of the origin

of All India Women Movement and its history but also contains a detailed work educational and social service and so forth carried on with such commendable zeal by womanhood in the various Indian provinces and states and also abroad, especially in connection with the Round Table Conference and the labors of the joint parliamentary committee.

The important contribution have been made by R. R. Diwakar's "Karnataka through the ages" and Prof. G. S. Halappa's "History of Freedom Movement in Karnataka", Vol-II has done excellent work on freedom movement in Karnataka and role played by women in the freedom struggle of Karnataka in depth. Geraldine Forbes (1996), Cambridge University Press: "Women in Modern India", IV Volume; In this book author have used a wide range of material produced by feminist scholars, as well as his own notes from years of researching women's history in India. He has been an active participant in the discovery and preservation of women's records and he has read through some private collections which he fear no longer exist. His objective is to privilege women's own accounts so he focusing throughout most of this book on women who were literate that makes them by their small numbers an elite. He begin this work with the male former's in nineteenth century India and he has chosen to proceed in this way because patriarchal / systems offer women few opportunities until men decide it is time for change, he acknowledge the British as sparking this change. Many of the reforms they proposed had little to do with the deepest needs of the society. However, education was one of the items on the reform agenda that contributed to the emancipation of women.

History of Karnataka by H.V. Srinivas Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan has emphasized the role of the women in the freedom struggle of Karnataka. A general review on the freedom struggle of Karnataka has been added in this work.

"Women Freedom Fighters in Karnataka" written by Sarojini Shintri and K. Raghavendrarao only for the purpose of review, undoubtedly, this work sets a premise for the role of women in the freedom struggle and provides some details of about 27 women freedom fighters who belong to both pre-Gandhian era and Gandhian era of freedom fight. It is very good literary work on women freedom fighters in Karnataka. But

unfortunately fails to cover very large number of women who have taken part in the freedom struggle. Therefore, it is a pointer to our review that the women freedom fighters in Karnataka is very comprehensive than accepted from the above work.

“Swatantrya Sangramade Smritigalu”, Vol. I, II and III by Dr. Suryanath Kamat have greatly the role of men in the freedom struggle and very little importance has been given to the role of women. Hence to highlight the role of women in India and Karnataka this work has been undertaken.

“Karnataka Rajakiya Mahile” written by Smt. Sharada Rajshekhar has described the role of women in the freedom struggle. But the information regarding the Karnataka women is limited to this list and also “Swatantrya Sangramdalli Namma Veera Vaniteyaru” written by Kamala Sampalli has confined the subject matter to limited heroic women of Karnataka but one should not forget the heroic activities of innumerable women during the freedom struggle

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the role of women in the freedom struggle of India, in general.
- To highlight the bravery shown by women freedom fighters from Karnataka, in particular.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of research:

It is a desk report and based on secondary data alone. No primary data has been collected in the process as it looks into historical perspective. Therefore, it is a descriptive study.

Nature of data: Qualitative data

Sources of secondary data: Internet, books, Articles in journals have been referred.

Before Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront of the national movement and became its undisputed leader, two women, Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu, had already made a deep impact on the minds of Indian women. They rendered a great service to the nation by involving women in India’s national movement. Annie Besant was a dynamic force in Indian Politics and rendered valuable service to the cause of national regeneration in India both from political and cultural

points of view. She worked with zeal and energy to make the idea of Home Rule popular in large parts of India. She founded the Home Rule League in 1916 and edited two journals, The New India and the Commonweal. Sarojini Naidu decided to enter into active politics and joined the Home Rule League in 1916. Gandhijis” non-cooperation movement included boycott of Government offices and institutions, courts, legislatures, etc., besides complete adoption of swadeshi cloth and boycott of foreign goods. People defied the law and nearly thirty thousand men and women courted arrest. The participation of women in this movement was unprecedented.

### CONCLUSION

Women of Karnataka and their role in the history of freedom struggle should be written in letters of gold. They dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom of their motherland and scarified there all to achieve their goal. The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. The Gandhian era of freedom struggle in Karnataka began roughly from 1920. As in all human historical events, there is bound to be some emphasis upon leadership of prominent personalities who stand out because of their greater initiative or forceful personality or organizing abilities.

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