

A Political Study of Contributions of Womens in Freedom Movement**Dr. Gavisiddappa.**Assistant professor,
GFGC ALAVANDI.**Introduction:**

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. However, their enjoyment of rights equally with that of men is far from satisfactory. In every society from ancient to modern times, women are considered as the property of men to serve their interest in both society and domestic front. They were denied the opportunities of education and refinement.

Women have had a special place in society since the beginning of human civilization. The role of women in the society is symbolic of teachers, pastoralists, assistant artisans, maids, etc. This paper intends to illustrate the role of womens in Indian freedom movement. Assessing the status of Indian women from a historical perspective is a need of the time. Because the history of the contribution of women from all arenas of life is neglected and incomplete. The truth is that they struggled with constant adversity and restored themselves. It is well said that, one is not born as a woman but rather becomes a woman. Although women's empowerment is a key issue in a modern country like India, it is often ridiculed. The secondary importance of women is often highlighted in the media and advertisements. This paper throws light on contribution of womens in freedom movement of India. This paper will discuss about the issues in contribution of womens in freedom movement in India.

Women's Life during British Era:-

In the modern world, many revolutions have taken place in Europe since the Industrial Revolution. Religious and social revival movements in Europe took place in modern times. Modern methods of education, new discoveries show that modernity has been adopted by Europeans.

Therefore, women in Europe and Britain appear to have more privileges than Indian women.

In European countries, these restrictions were imposed on women at that time, and in order to overcome these restrictions, women's liberation movements appear to have taken place in European countries. After the arrival of the British in India, modern education was developed and spread. By adopting this teaching of the British, the Indian middle class became rationalists. This led to social and religious reform movements as well as gave birth to women reformers in India.

British liberalism gave impetus to women's movements. In the nineteenth century, women like Savitribai Phule, Tarabai Shinde, Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade, Laxmibai Tilak, Dr. Anandibai Joshi contributed to the social development of women in India. In the uprising of 1857, women like Rani Lakshimibai, Begum Jhalkaribai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Maina Peshwa, dancer Aziz Begum and Zeenat Mahal proved the courage of an Indian woman.

Involvement of women in Indian freedom struggle:-

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation of India, seems to have done a lot of thinking and writing on women's issues during the Indian War of Independence. Therefore, it is seen that women have played a significant role in the non-cooperation movement, civil disobedience and Quit India movement called by Gandhiji against the British. During this period, women freedom fighters took part in anti-British movements. In which Pandit Nehru's sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Sucheta Kripalani, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Dr. Sushila Nair, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Hansaben Mehta, Rajkumari Kaur, Urmila Devi, Pandita Sumati Shah, Anusaya Kale, Mridula Sarabhai, Avantika Gokhale, Sarladevi Chaudhary,

Smt. Kamalaben Patel contributed to the freedom struggle.

The contribution of foreign women in the Indian freedom struggle is also significant. Leading the way are women like Anne Besant, Madame Cama, Sister Nivedita, Neil Sen Gupta, Miraben. Indian and foreign women who participated in India's freedom struggle had to suffer a lot. On some occasions women had to stay in jail but they proved their contribution. So, women's contribution to Indian independence is significant.

Women's Participation in the Revolutionary Movement:

The contribution of revolutionary men in the Indian freedom struggle is very important and so is that of women revolutionaries. The Indian revolutionaries, in their style of terrorizing the Indians, contributed to the freedom struggle by adopting the repressive tactics adopted by the British. Which appears to include a large number of women revolutionaries.

Indian women participated in national programs such as Swarajya, Swadeshi, Bahishkar, Rashtriya Shikshan. At the same time, Indian revolutionary women took part in terrorist activities such as setting up secret organizations, wielding weapons, training them, looting government treasury offices, and marking tyrannical officials. Among them are Veena Das, Suhasini Ganguly, Shanti Ghosh, Suniti Chaudhary, Ujwala Mujumdar, Sushiladidi Ghosh, Parul Mukherjee, Preetilata Vaddedar, Yamunabai Savarkar, Yesubai Savarkar, Rajmati Patil, Lilatai Patil, Kalpana Dutt, Durgadevi Bahra, Yamuna Dasyakarya .

The Azad Hind Sena, formed by Subhash Chandra Bose, is an important contributor to India's independence. The Azad Hind Fauj consisted of brave women like Capt. Lakshmi Sehgal, Smt. M.A Chidambaram, Pratima Sen, Shakuntala Gandhi, Smt. Gurudayal Kaur and Jyotirmoyee Gangoli. These women set an example to the world of women's militancy through the Azad Hind Fauj against the British. Indian women seem to have made significant contributions on the occasion of the merger of the Sansthan through the Stree Praja Parishad movement during the Partition of India.

In post-independence India, women in the Satyashodhak Samaj, women in the Swabhimani movement, women in the Dalit movement, women in the farmers, tribal and labor movements, women in the anti-inflation, anti-emergency movement, women in the Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao movement and environmental activists, Muslim Satyashodhak Samaj, Women in the feticide and daughter rescue movement, women on the path to empowerment in politics have proved their capability and importance to the society .

Even so, women have been neglected by Indian society. The woman's place in the family is limited to the Chul and the Mul. Influenced by the idea of an agrarian personality, the society imposed many restrictions on women which are still an obstacle in the way of her liberation.

Facets in women's freedom struggle:

With the turn of the 19th century, new ideas began to sweep across the country and it was then that women's organisations and a strong women's movement took place. Women entered public life and themselves became, through their organisations, the spearhead of attack against the irrational orthodoxy, injustice and discrimination to which they were subjected. With the very first phase of the political movement, a new chapter had opened in the history of Indian women, even before Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront of the national movement.

(1) After 1917, the movement for the right of adult franchise to women gained momentum and achieved tremendous success. As a result of this, women were elected to Councils, Municipalities and local institutions. Sarojini Naidu, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Mira Behn and Kasturba Gandhi took active part in the National Movement.

(2) Annie Besant with her militant demand for Home Rule created a deep impression on Indian women and inspired them to actively participate in the struggle for freedom. In 1917 ,she was elected the first Women President of the Indian National Congress. In the same year, Annie Besant with the help of Margaret Cousins, founded the Women's Association in Madras Which became a model for women's institutions elsewhere in the country.

(3) In 1928, for the second time, Indian women, Sarojini Naidu was chosen President of the

Indian National Congress. Women further consolidated their gains in 1930 when three of them Sarojini Naidu, Jehanara Shah Nawaz and Radhabai Subbaroyan were invited to take part in the Round Table conference convened in London. Several women became ministers or parliamentary secretaries in the popular ministries of 1937. Hundreds of them became members of municipalities and other organs of local government.

British Legislations Concerning Women

- i. Prevention of Sati Act Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy strove by propagna to put an end to the pracitce of sati and finally in 1829, Lord William Bentick, an enlightened Governor-General, passed the Prevention of Sati Act, according to which anyone abetting the commission of Sati would be guilty of culpable homicide and anyone taking part in compelling a women to commit sati would be guilty of murder. Orthodox Hindu groups appealed to the Privy Council against the Act.
- ii. Widow Remarriage Act In 1856, the Widow Remarriage Act was passed, legalising the marriage of widows and declaring the issues of such marriages as legitimate. Widow homes were set up by social welfare agencies to ameliorate their conditions and to offer them new opportunities for economic independence.
- iii. Abolition of Polygamy Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar raised their voice against polygamy. In 1 855, the Maharaja of Burdwan appealed to the Bengal legislative Council to check polygamy because under this system, the wives were Virtually slaves, to be used and abused, humiliated and illiterate by the vicious husbands. But the Bengal Government did not respond to the maharajal appeal. Later on, the reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen mounted pressure on the Bengal Government and ultimately in 1872, an Act was passed abolishing polygamy. The Act also abolished child marriage, legalised widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage.
- iv. The Sharda Act (1929) Before 1929, girls below 12 years of age were married off. In 1927, Harbilas Sharda introduced a Bill before the legislature to regulate marriage among the Hindus. The Act was subsequently known as

the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, or popularly known as the Sharda Act. The operation of the Act extended to the whole of India. It fixed the minimum age of marriage for girls at 14 and for boys at 16 years.

- v. Hindu Women's Right to Property (1937) One of the most important enactments to give better rights to women with regard to property was the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act (1937), passed mainly due to the efforts of Deshmukh. The Act provided a powerful weapon in the hands of the progressive forces of Hindu society and had struck a powerful blow to the traditional authoritatan, male-dominated Hindu social edifice and marked a _new phase in the history of women's struggle for equality with men in Hindu society'.

Constitutional Provisions For women

The enactments referred to above were revolutionary in character. The concept of the old Hindu law laid down by Manu as a divine precept has been completely destroyed and today, women have the same legal rights and status as men in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession and adoption. Women's struggle for equality took a big step forward with the coming of independence. Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian constitution (1950) guaranteed the complete equality of men and women.

Women's Organisations

Movements for the emancipation of women and spread of education among women led the establishment of a number of organisations. Formed for women, which became the medium for the expression of women's opinion. Some of these important organistions were as under

(1) The Women's Indian Association It was founded by an Irish feminist and theosophist, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, in 1915. Its membership was open to both Indians and Europeans. Annie Besant was its first President. The principal work of the Women's Indian Association was educational. They setup adult classes for literacy, sewing and First Aid. It also set up widow homes.

(2) The National Council of Women for India It was an All-India organisation established in 1925, which was affiliated to the International

Council of Women. But on account of its elitist nature, the council failed to grow and become a Vital nationalist organisation.

(3) The All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) It was secular in outlook and most truly Indian organisation. The AIWC created a great deal of public Opinion in favour of the Child Marriage Restraint Act or Sharda Act. It also fought for other Vital issues of the society like -female education, Purdah, widow remarriage, status of women in the family etc.

Concluding Remarks:

Women's are vital part of society and plays a greater role in the socio-economic and historic progress of our nation. Now a day's women study is one of the momentous issues in the world. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. The rationalist reformers have proved that women are just as efficient and capable as men. Although feminism is a concept in the West, it is a fact that women in India are still living under the shadow of economic, social, psychological and cultural oppression. Therefore, this fact cannot be ignored. The problems of Indian woman cannot be assessed on the basis of Western concepts, her social, political, economic, religious, cultural status, her constitution, her personality and mental state need to be focused in Indian context.

In this point of view we may say that, the study of contribution of womens in freedom movement of India have various facets like social, political, economic, religious and cultural position of women. Since ancient times some hypocritical people in the society-imposed restrictions on women from time to time on their dignity. Therefore we could say that the womens freedom fighters have contributed equally comparing to men.

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