



Research Paper

The Iron Ladies of India and their Role in the Freedom Struggle.

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ABSTRACT: The history of Indian Freedom Struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women. The sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitations and hardships to earn us freedom. When most of the men freedom fighters were in prison the women came forward and took charge of the struggle. The list of great women whose names have gone down in history for their dedication and undying devotion to the service of India is a long one.

Key words: Women, Freedom Struggle, Sacrifice, Rani Laxmi Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Woman's participation in India's freedom struggle started as ahead of schedule as in 1817. Bhima Bai Holkar battled intrepidly against the British Colonel Malcolm and vanquished him in guerrilla warfare. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi whose bravery and brilliant leadership laid on remarkable case of genuine patriotism. Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijay Lakshmi Savant, Annie Besant and so on in the twentieth century are the names which are recalled even today for their particular contribution both in front line and in political field.

Bhima Bai Holkar :- In 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar battled against the British Colonel Malcolm and vanquished him in guerrilla fighting. At an exceptionally basic time for our country when the British East India Company was quick extending its realm in India, When Tipu Sultan had been massacred (1799), the Marathas had been vanquished (1815), Chennamma the widowed ruler of Raja Malla Sarja disappointed the ruses of British to add her kingdom Kittur, a small territory in the present Belgaum District of Karnataka. She battled against the forceful British armed force and scored starting achievement.

Rani Lakshmi Bai:- Rani of Jhansi Rani, Lakshmi Bai whose gallantry and brilliant leadership laid an extraordinary case for every future age of women freedom fighters. As rightly quoted by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan,

“**Khoob Ladi Mardani Wo To Jhansi Wali Rani Thi**”
(She fought like men, she was the queen of Jhansi. Rani Laxmibai)

Married to Gangadhar Rao ruler of Jhansi, she was not permitted to receive a successor after the death of her husband by the British, and Jhansi was annexed through the infamous Doctrine of Lapse by Dalhousie. With the flare-up of the Revolt she wound up resolved to battle back. She used to go into the combat zone dressed as a man. Holding the reins of their steed in her mouth she utilized the sword with the two hands. Under her leadership the Rani's troops demonstrated fearless bravery and returned shot for shot. Considered by the British as the best and most daring military pioneer of dissidents this shining substance of boldness kicked the bucket a hero's passing in the front line. The primary name that strikes a chord is that of celebrated Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. Wearing the men's garments, she drove her troopers to war against the British. Indeed, even her foes respected her bravery and challenging. She battled valiantly and, albeit beaten, she declined to surrender and fell, as a warrior should, battling the adversary to the last. Her amazing boldness enlivened many men and women, battling the adversary to the last. Her amazing mettle motivated many men and women in India to ascend against the outside run the show.

Sarojini Naidu:- Sarojini Naidu popularly known as "Nightangle of India" was chosen as a leader of Indian National Congress. Sensational gathering with another regarded pioneer of time, Gokhle, in 1906 was to change her life for eternity. His reaction to her blazing discourse brought into her life the effect of a visionary who

found in her rhetoric and splendour a pioneer without bounds. The period from 1917 to 1919 was the most unique period of Sarojini vocation. Amid this time, she battled for the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, the Khilafat issue, the draconian Rowlatt Act and the Satyagraha. When Gandhi propelled the Civil Disobedience Movement, She demonstrated a reliable lieutenant. With awesome fearlessness she suppressed the rotors, sold restricted writing, and tended to excited gatherings on the butchery at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar. In 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi picked her to lead the salt Satyagraha the narratives of her bravery wound up army. After Gandhi's capture she had arranged 2,000 volunteers under the burning sun to assault the Dharshana Salt Works, while the police confronted them a large portion of a mile up the street with rifle, lathis (canes) and steel tipped clubs. The Volunteers uncontrollably cheered when she shook off the arm of the British cop who came to capture her and walked gladly to the spiked metal in full power and she went under the impact of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Gandhi. Gokhale exhorted her to save all her vitality and abilities for the nation's cause. She surrendered composing verse and completely gave herself to emancipation of women, instruction, Hindu-Muslim solidarity and so on. She turned into a devotee of Gandhi and went with him to England. At whatever point in England, she straightforwardly censured British lead in India which grabbed the eye of researchers and intelligent people.

Kasturba Gandhi:- Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's spouse joined her better half while he was in south Africa and worked with him for a long time there. She was a pioneer of women's Satyagraha for which she was detained. She helped her better half on account of Indigo labourer in Champaran, Bihar and the No expense Campaign in Kheda, Gujarat. She was captured twice to picket alcohol and remote material shops, and in 1939 for taking part in the Rajkot Satyagraha.

Madam Bhikaji Cama: - Madam Cama battled for the freedom of the nation till towards the end in her own specific manner, and helped many progressives with cash and materials. She spread out the main National Flag at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart (Germany) in 1907. She pronounced "The banner is of Indian Independence! Observe it is conceived! It has been made consecrated by the blood of Young Indians who yielded their lives. I call upon you, gentlemen to rise and salute this banner of Indian Independence. For the sake of this banner, I bid to admirers of freedom everywhere throughout the world to help this banner". "A thousand agents from a few nations were gone to. She voyaged a considerable measure of spots including America and engenders Americans about Indians battling for Independence.

Begam Hazrat Mahal:- Begam Hazrat Mahal was an incredible Indian freedom-fighter who assumed a noteworthy job amid India's First War of Independence. She was otherwise called Begum of Awadh and the spouse of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Lucknow. She drove a band of her supporters against the British, and was even ready to grab the control of Lucknow. She worked in shut relationship with different leaders of the India's First War of Independence, including Nana Sahib. Begum was a strategist as well as battled on the front line. At the point when the powers under the command of the British re-caught Lucknow and the vast majority of the piece of Awadh, she was compelled to withdraw. At the point when her powers lost ground, she fled Awadh and sorted out warriors again in different spots. She turned down all offers of pardon and remittances by the British rulers. Finally, she took shelter in a refuge in Nepal, where she kicked the bucket in the year 1879. To recognize her unlimited endeavours in battling for the freedom of nation, the Government of India issued a stamp on tenth May 1984.

Aruna Asaf Ali:- Aruna Asaf Ali, an extreme nationalist assumed an exceptional job in the noteworthy Quit India Movement propelled by Mahatma Gandhi on August 9, 1942, and was a pioneer of the underground movement. She distributed releases, went from place to place and even met Mahatma Gandhi keeping away from capture. She altered Inqilab a month to month diary of the Indian National Congress.

Annie Besant:- Annie Besant an Irish Lady the pioneer of the Theosophical Society joined the Indian National Congress and gave it another bearing. She was the primary women leader of the congress and gave a ground-breaking lead to Women's movement in India. She before long turned into a main work coordinator, strike pioneer and reformer. She likewise wound up engaged with Indian Nationalism and in 1916 built up the Indian Home Rule League of which she moved toward becoming President. She began a daily paper, "New India", criticized British control and was imprisoned for rebellion. She got engaged with Political and instructive exercises and set up various schools and universities, the most imperative of which was Central Hindu College and School in Banaras which she began in 1913.

Kamala Nehru:- Kamala Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's spouse gave full help to her better half in his longing to work effectively for the freedom struggle. In the Nehru main residence of Allahabad, She composed parades, tended to gatherings and drove picketing of alcohol and remote fabric shops. She had a conspicuous influence in arranging the No Tax Campaign in United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). In the Non Cooperation movement of 1921, she composed gatherings of women in Allahabad and Propagated utilization of Khadi materials. At the point when her significant other was captured, to avert him conveying a 'rebellious public discourse', she went in his place to peruse it out. She was twice captured by British specialists.

Vijay Lakshmi Pundit:- Vijay Lakshmi Pundit was the daughter of Motilal Nehru, and sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. She was enlivened by Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi and inspired by Sarojini Naidu. She entered the Non Co-activity Movement to battle against the British run the show. Vijay Lakshmi spoke to India in many of the Conferences abroad. She went to various public addresses and tested the British commanded delegate's rights to speak to India in that. She was an awesome fighter and took parts in many of the freedom movement. She was captured in 1932 and condemned to one year's thorough imprisonment. She was captured in 1940 but again amid the Quit India Movement in 1942.

In the early long periods of 1900s i.e. from 1901-10, a portion of the women of Punjab in the principle took an interest inside the reformatory works. They began their diaries with accentuation on featuring women issues. Bibi Harnam Kaur together with her better half Bhai Takht Singh opened 'Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya' in Ferozepur in 1894 and in 1907; this establishment began its instructive diary 'Punjabi Bhain'.

Sarla Devi Chaudhurani together with other significant ladies like Rambhuj Dutt Chaudhari (an Arya Samaj pioneer) established 'Hindu-Sahayak Sabha' in Lahore in 1906. Later parts of this Sabha were established in Multan, Jhang, Sialkot, Lyallpur and Gujranwala. The Sabhas were opened to train men and women physically as they were given training in gymnastics, swordplay, and Gatka battles and different exercises. Sarla Devi worked for women training inside the towns around Lahore and had bigger plans for the instruction of purdah women. In 1910, she established Bharat Stree Maha-mandal at Allahabad to advance female training and opened its branches at Lahore, Allahabad, Delhi, Karachi, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Bankura, Hazaribagh, Midnapore and Calcutta to unite women of each station, belief, class and gathering based on their regular advantages in the good and material advancement of the women of India for transport instruction to purdah women.

Participation Of Women In The First War Of India's Independence (1857-59):

The change 1857 – 58 was the primary sorted out equipped endeavour by the Indians to free themselves from the political grasp of the English. The period was one of incredible tribulation for the Indians and the English alike, in light of the fact that the destiny of both experienced such seizures which were carved in the history of the nation. The British developed triumphant, yet the Indians picked up too in light of the fact that the movement turned into an image of quality and forfeit for the ensuing ages.

In the decade going before the episode the political guide of India was drastically changed. Ruler Dalhousie had strengthened the procedure of extension through a vivacious use of the arrangement of lapse. The long stretches of his administration (1848-56) saw the assimilation of nothing under eight States which implied that a quarter million square miles of domain was added towards the East India Company's regional points of confinement. The period additionally saw the minister exercises against early marriage, purdah framework, Widow Re-marriage Bill in 1856, exercises of some English officers occupied with converting, the presentation of railroads, transmit and the lobed cartridge

The climate of the nation and particularly of northern India was obfuscated with obscure doubts. The general population felt affirmed in their confidence that the British experts were not happy with minor addition of the States but rather needed to meddle in their religious undertakings and end the position framework.

The principal indications of turmoil were felt in the primary quarter of the year 1857 when the Sepoys of Berhampore (five miles east of Nowgong), Barrackpore and Ambala depended on flammables. The Indian Regiments were disbanded and the guilty parties rebuffed. This, be that as it may, did not peaceful the circumstance and demonstrated just a prelude to the open defiance which followed in May.

The leaders of the main war of independence were the two men and women, most imperative among the last being Begum Hazarat Mahal, Rani Mahal, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rani of Ramgarh and Rani Tace Bai. Some of them drove troops to the war zone and battled; while others acknowledged the sufferings and privation, imprisonment and demise.

It was on April 24, 1857, that C. Smyth, Commandant, third Light Cavalry, requested a motorcade to test the steadfastness of the fighters, at Meerut. Out of ninety Sepoys present, 85 declined to acknowledge new cartridges. Thus, they were court-martialled drove and were condemned to shifting terms imprisonment stretching out up to 10 years.

The Sentence in this way passed was reported on May 9, 1857, within the sight of a social event with a mean to make an alarm and dread. The Sepoys were deprived of their garbs and afterward were given over to the smiths for securing shackles round their arms and legs. The sight may have been beautiful for the English Commander yet the entire issue was offensive to the Indians gathered. "There was a decent arrangement of mumbling in your positions" says Gough, "and had it not been for the nearness of the British troops it is difficult to state what probably won't have occurred."

Later at night the "Women of Bazar" scoffed at the Sepoys. "Your brethren have been ornamented with anklets and imprisoned and for what? Since they would not swerve from their belief and you quitters, as you are, sit still unconcerned with your destiny. On the off chance that you have a particle of manhood in you, go and discharge them."

The insults aroused their hearts. The start which tumbled from female lips touched off it without a moment's delay and the evening of the May 10, 1857, saw the commencement of a catastrophe at no other time saw since India go under British influence. The blazes of fire which broke out at Meerut, on May 10, spread quickly over a vast piece of northern India.

II. WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD:

The women's movements in the provincial time frame are for the most part of two unique concepts;

(1) **Social Change movements**, and

(2) **Nationalist movements**.

Social Reform Movements - The women's movements started as a social change movement in the nineteenth century. The British triumph and its control over India achieved change in Indian economy and also in society. The new land income settlements, business horticulture and infrastructural offices like streets, railroads, postal and transmit administrations and so forth introduced by the British prompted a critical change in the Indian town economy. The new financial framework and authoritative apparatus required another kind of instructed individual which brought about the establishment of Western instructive organizations bestowing present day training.

The Indians who were the recipients of the new financial framework were pulled in towards this and therefore another class of scholarly people developed in the Indian society. The well-spoken intellectual elite turned into the pioneers of all dynamic majority rule movements: social, political, financial and social. The change movements were not homogeneous and differed a great deal as far as the thoughts and changes that should have been cultivated. They did anyway share a typical worry for finding the social disasters, somewhat because of charges of barbarity from the provincial rulers. This was a time of the authoritative control and impact of pilgrim belief system. This was a period of change, one of the developing middle class society and estimations of new methods of thought.

Women additionally participated in the struggle against imperialism, yet while they were urged to take an interest by leaders like Gandhi, their work in the struggles was only an expansion of their household work. Not very many women were permitted to unite the front positions with men, and the ones that did, discussed the disengagement they felt on occasion (Kumar, 1993). As a type of reaction to these new thoughts that imperialism conveyed to India, women's jobs were being pushed to a more customary lifestyle.

Nationalist Movements - Because of the social change movement of the nineteenth century, the social indecencies were wiped out and openings were given to women to their training. The extension of women's training and their admission to instructive organizations had delivered a sizable number of English taught working class women by the late nineteenth century-and they made their essence felt in political exercises. The attributes of the second period of women's movement i.e. the national movement are: out of the blue many women having a place with the white collar class, began participating in the political exercises. Till 1919, the national movement was constrained to the urban privileged and it was later with Gandhi's passage into the national movement, participation of the majority started to happen. In this stage, political developments and women's participation in the National movement went as an inseparable unit.

The segment of Bengal in 1905 brought about the starting of Swadeshi movement by the nationalists. In spite of the fact that there was the nonappearance of mass arousing among the women, however gatherings were orchestrated and Khadi spinning were taken up by women. Women contributed their bangles, nose rings and arm ornaments to the national store. In towns, women began securing a bunch of grain every day for such reason. The women of Bengal and Punjab took dynamic part in the Swadeshi movement. The women labourers of the Arya Samaj were likewise in charge of stimulating national soul among the general population. Swarna Kumari, sister of Rabindranath Tagore and her girl Sarala Devi were solid supporters of the Swadeshi movement. Critical women who took an interest in the progressive exercises were Mrs. Shyamji Krishna Varma, Ms. P. Naoroji, Ms. M. Chattopadhyaya, and Madam Bhikaji Rustom, K. R. Kane, a general among the Indian

progressives situated in Europe, composed to the exercises of the progressives. She likewise raised issues of women's fairness at international communist circles mirroring the Indian reality.

This Swadeshi period denoted the arrangement of a few women's associations. Sarala Devi found a way to sort out the women's movement and its core as Bharat Stri Maha Mandal in Lahore in 1910. Parts of this association were set up at Allahabad and Calcutta. The goal of this society was to unite women everything being equal and statement of faith based on their monetary enthusiasm for the good and material advancement of Indian women. Parvati Devi, the headmistress of a Hindu young ladies' school at Kanchi a residential area in the Madras administration began Kanchi Mahila Parishad to outfit women of Kanchi with learning to make public supposition over consuming issues of the country.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above discussion it is clear that the history of freedom struggle is replete with the saga of sacrifice, bravery, selflessness and political sagacity of women. The history of Indian Freedom Struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution made by these brave women. Many women assumed a gallant job in Indian freedom movement but unfortunately some of them are lost in the pages of history. Therefore, the need of the hour is to highlight the contribution made by these brave daughters of the soil in the freedom struggle of their motherland.

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