



Research Paper

Unsung Women Freedom Fighters: Lost in the Pages of History

Assistant Professor: Tamanna Sharma
Punjab Constituent College, Karyal, Moga.

Abstract: Huge number of people sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom. Some got enormous respect, fame but some remained unidentified. The history of freedom struggle could not be accomplished without the contribution of women. We have enormous numbers of unsung women freedom fighters who made sacrifices for the freedom of our country and still remained unnoticed. This Research paper is devoted to all those unsung heroines of freedom struggle who lit the flame of rebellion against imperialism and devoted their lives to Bharat Mata. It pays tribute to the flabbergasted story of Pratilata Waddedar, Basanti Devi, Aruna Asaf Ali, Kamaldevi Chattopadhyay, Metangini Hazra, Bhikaji Cama, Suniti Chaudhary, Jhalkari Bai, Savitribhai Phule, Beegum Hazrat.

Keywords: Patriotics, Freedom struggle, Unsung heroines, Tribute

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Pratilata Waddedar (1911-1932) Pratilata Waddedar birthed on 5 May, 1911 in Chittagong. She was one of the first women freedom fighters who affianced in revolutionary activities and paved the way for women to engage in such rebellious activities. When she was young she joined Deepali Singh a mutinous organization which provided the women with battle training and tried to help them in making rigorous warriors. She wanted to join Surya Sen's Indian rebellious Army but she failed to join that because it was totally dictated by patriarchy. Then with the help of Kalpana Dutt she got succeed in joining that group. After the Chittagong Armoury Raid in which most of the leaders were discerned Pratilata at the age of 21 has given the commandment of group 7-10 young men who laid beleaguement of Pahartali European Club. It was notoriously known for its racial and discriminatory practices. This group had a sign that said "Dog and Indians not allowed". On the night of 23 September, 1932 she was cross-dressed as a man and bravely attacked the opposition but because of a shot in the leg she was unable to continue the fight but instead surrendering she chose to sacrifice her life by swallowing cyanide and thus she became a martyr.

Basanti Devi (1880-1974) Basanti Devi started taking part in the freedom struggle after her husband was discerned for his involvement in the Non-Cooperation movement. She also became the part of movements such as khilafat and Civil Disobedience. She became the founding member of Nari Karma Mandira an academic centre for women. After the demise of her husband she led the publication of Bangalar Katha. She commanded the Bangal Provincial Congress as its president and became the recipient of Padma Vibushan in 1973.

Aruna Asaf Ali (1909-1996) Aruna Asaf Ali was an Indian educator, active in politics and also was a publisher. She remained unnoticed even her active participation in Quit India Movement and for hoisting the Congress flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay. During the Quit Indian Movement in 1942 for her captivating bravery she was called the "Grand old lady of the independence movement". Later she worked as an editor of Inquilab a monthly magazine for Congress Party in collaboration with Ram Monohar Lohia. In 1944 issue she tried to persuade the youth by saying that avoid the infelicitous decisions of Non-Violence and became a part of the rebellion. Revolutionist such as Jayaprakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali has given the epithet as "The political children of Gandhi but recent students of Karl Marx". She is one of the women freedom fighters who has given her extensive contribution in our independence struggle.

Metangini Hazra (1870-1942) benevolently known as Gandhi Buri, Bengali for old lady Gandhi. She is one of the Women Freedom Fighters who contributed to the Indian Freedom struggle until the British Army shot her to death in front of Tamluk Police Station. She is one of the first women warrior whose statue has been erected in Kolkata. Hazra road has also been constructed in her honour.

Bhikaji Cama (1861-1936) Bhikaji Cama was one of the influential women warriors who hoisted the Indian Flag on the Foreign Land of Stuttgart, Germany on 22 August, 1907. She was born in a Parsi family and got married to Rustomji Cama who was Pro-British, so the disparity of their thoughts led to their unhappy marriage and she devoted most of her time to social work. She was in combat with leaders from Egypt, France, Iran and Russia. She was diagnosed with Plague during the 1896 Plague in Bombay. Later she recovered but it affected her health and she went to Europe for better treatment in 1902. While staying in Europe she met several nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, Lala Hardyal, Shyamji Krishnavarma and addressed several public meetings in London's Hyde Park. She became the Co-founder of Paris Indian Society. Apart from that she also wrote and published revolutionary literature.

Bina Das (1911-1986) Bina Das was a Bengali-born woman who led a rebellion whose parents were active in the Brahmo Samaj and the Indian freedom fights that shaped her rebellious thoughts against Imperialism. She was the member of Chatri Sangha, a semi-revolutionary group of women's organization in Kolkata. She attempted several times to kill Bengal Governor Stanley Jackson on February 6, 1932 in the convocation hall of the University. The revolver was provided by Kamala Das Gupta another woman warrior but in spite of her several attempts she remained unsuccessful and was given the nine-year prison term. After she got released in 1939, Das joined Congress party and participated in India's Quit Movement and again discerned from 1942 to 1945. She will always be remembered as one of the most influential women fighters.

Suniti Chaudhary (1917-1988) Suniti Chaudhary is one of the youngest female fighters and Indian Patriot. At the age of 16 she in collaboration with Santi Ghose presented the petition of organizing a swimming competition among their classmates. Both of them entered the office of Geoffrey Stevens, a British bureaucrat and district magistrate of Comilla. On December 14, 1931 when the magistrate was busy in reading the petition Suniti Chaudhary took out the automatic pistols from her shawl and assassinated him. She will be known as one of the valourous Indian Patriots.

Jhalkari Bai (1830-1858) No one is ignorant of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi but very few know the name of Jhalkari Bai who supported Rani Lakshmi Bai and rescued her at the time of siege. She is one of the lesser-known women rebellions of India's freedom struggle. Her role is very crucial in 1857's rebellion. She worked as an active participant of Women's Army of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. During the siege of Jhansi she assumed the Queen's identity and fought on the front line and rescued Rani Lakshmi Bai from the enemy soldiers.

Savitri Bai Phule (1831-1897) Savitri Bai Phule, a Maharashtrian poet, educator, and social worker. She in collaboration with her husband Jyotiba Phule established one of the first Indian Girl's School in 1848 and thus paved the way for girls in Indian male-dominated society. She and her husband in Maharashtra gave their enormous contribution for the advancement of women's rights in India she also fought to remove the caste discrimination, gender prejudices from the Indian society.

Beegam Hazrat was born in Awadh's Faizabad. At the time of 1857 uprising she was one of the few women warriors who went against the British. She got married to Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh. She was ex-patriated to Calcutta when Awadh was trounced by the British East India Company in 1856. In collaboration with her son Birjis Qadir she took the decision to remain in Lucknow. After a rebellion started in Meerut, Awadh was arragated and the flag of rebellion was hoisted in Lucknow which later spread in other towns.

So, the countenance of Beegum Hazrat will always be recognised as the one who sacrificed everything for the sake of freedom from British Imperialism.

To sum up, I want to say that without considering the efforts, sacrifices made by the Indian Women Chauvinistics we can't recollect the Heroic history of Indian freedom struggles. The countenances of all these prodigious women freedom warriors should always be remembered and all of us should give them the tribute, respect that these patriots deserved whereas they always remained unidentified. The impetus of this research paper is to give tribute to all these courageous unsung women warriors.

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