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# The Role of Women in Quit India Movement

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### Abstract

Indian women had fought shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk in the battle of Swaraj and earned a well-deserved recognition for their glorious role in the national movement. However, earlier they were being appreciated for the supportive rather than a direct participatory role. The role of the Indian women in the freedom movement entered yet another decisive phase with the advent of Gandhiji. At the beginning of the Quit India Movement all the leaders of the Congress were imprisoned. In such a sudden situation some famous women leaders took the responsibility of handling the movement in the face of unprecedented police oppression. Some women leaders lead the movement even from the front. Among the leading women, Usha Mehta, Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sarojini Naidu and others gloriously contributed to the movement. In the other hands, thousands of women who suffered and sacrificed remained unknown and unsung. Most women who participated in the movement were common families. Matangini Hazra was a widow of 70 years, Konkalata Barua was a student leader and Vogeshwari Fukonani was a housewife. Many of the women participating in the movement were peasant workers, aboriginal families. Indian prostitutes were given a continuous and silent role in the national movement. This spontaneous mass movement, women should be remembered with respect for their glorious role.

**Keywords:** The order in which events happen, called lower class people, Rural area, Active participant, Natural and unconstrained, Woman sex worker

### Introduction

"Woman is more fitted than man to make exploration and take bolder action in nonviolence. There is no occasion for consider themselves subordinate or inferior to man. Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women"- M.K.Gandhi.

Indian women had a glorious and significant role in the Quit India movement. The role of the Indian women in the freedom movement entered yet another decisive phase with the advent of Gandhiji. The National Congress led by Gandhiji started the Quit India Movement in 1942. The Quit India resolution spoke directly to women "as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom". Indian women played an important and glorious role in this "spontaneous mass movement

Leading women, most of them are well-established and well-educated representatives of upper class of society, most of them led the movement even from the front. Subaltern women were directly associated with the movement, most of them belong to poor and working families from lower class of society.

### Women Leaders

At the beginning of the Quit India movement all the leaders of the Congress were imprisoned. In such a sudden situation some famous women leaders took the responsibility of handling the movement in the face of unprecedented police oppression. Usha Mehta Was a famous leader of Quit India Movement. She committed patriot set up a radio transmitter, called the Voice of freedom to disseminate information about the war for freedom. News of protest and arrests, deeds of young nationalists and Gandhi's famous 'Do or Die' message for the quit India movement were circulated amongst the masses. Usha and her brother persisted with their task of broadcasting until their arrest on November 12, 1942. Usha was sentenced to four years jail. In prison she found many

### I want to discuss the Role of Women in Quit India Movement Chronologically by arranging it in Two Levels

1. Role of leading women.
2. Role of "General" women.

people who like herself, had joined the movement out of conviction, patriotism, and regard for congress leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi.

Sarojini Naidu joined the 'Quit India' movement launched by Gandhiji and again was victim of the wrath of the British government and jailed. The repeated jail terms only gave her more courage and she continued to take active part in the freedom movement. Sarojini's daughter Miss Padmaja Naidu devoted herself to the cause of nation like her mother. At the age of 21, she entered the national scene and became the joint founder of the Indian National Congress of Hyderabad, she spread the message of khadi and inspired people to boycott foreign goods. She was jailed for taking part in the 'Quit India' movement in 1942.

Aruna Asaf Ali was another leader of the Quit India Movement. Mata Rameshwari Nehru introduced Aruna to the Delhi women's League and Satyawati Devi brought her into the civil Disobedience Movement. Aruna broke the salt law, was arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned in Lucknow. She became a leader of the underground movement in 1942 and was forced to remain in hiding until 1946 during her three and a half years in hiding, Aruna was constantly in motion, urging people to liberate the land from foreign Rule. Some historians have labeled Aruna as the most important leader of the resistance. She is widely remembered for having hoisted the national flag at Mumbai during the Quit India movement. She had hid themselves for quite some time, during this time, She actively participated in the August movement with Jayprakash Narayan, Rommonahar Lohea, Achyut Patwardhan. The British government announces that Aruna Asaf Ali can be taken dead or alive, a good amount of prize will be given. When Nehru was released from prison he made special mention of Aruna Asaf Ali as "One of India's brave women"

Sucheta Kripalani was another prominent woman leader of the Quit India movement though her tactics were far removed from those of Aruna Asaf Ali. She had started working in the congress office in 1939 and in 1940, She was chosen to organize a women's department of the Indian National Congress. The women's department wanted to raise the political consciousness of women and identify congress with social change that benefited women. Clearly this new department intended to co-opt the function of the national women's organizations and place women under the control of the Indian National Congress. The women's department had hardly begun its work when Sucheta offered 'Individual Satyagraha' and was imprisoned for two years. She was out of prison when congress leaders were arrested in 1942 and, hearing the news, decided to go into hiding. Sucheta's first job was to establish contact with groups still active throughout India and encourage them to continue non-violent activity.

### Role of General Women

When the movement spread to the countryside, large number of peasant women joined men in protesting against taxes, land tenure, and landholder's rights. A larger part of the women demonstrators in the Quit India Movement came from general family, especially college and school girls played an important role. After the foundation of "Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar" in Midnapore district many general women admitted to the women volunteer force "Bhagni Sena", they were keen in the discharge of their responsibility. Kanaklata (age 17), and Fuleshwari (age 12) were memorable for their active participation in the Quit India movement in Asam. Punjabi housewife Vogeshwari Fukonani was memorable for her

Sacrificing on the road procession. Many girl students joined the Gujarat student organization "Banar Sena". Shanti Das, Lavanya Prabha Ghosh, Hiranmayi Roy, Rama Sen, Himavati Sen, Kumari Sengupta of Bankura Christian college led picketing, 30-40 students from Bankura Girls school regularly joined in this picketing.

Matangini Hazra (b. 1870) had been the child bride of Trilochan Hazra, a sixty-year-old widower. By age eighteen she was a widow. At age sixty-two she took the Congress pledge and ten years later, in 1942, she asked to lead a battalion. On September 29 she urged the crowd onward in the name of Gandhiji and refused to stop when challenged. She was shot first in the hand holding the flag and then in the head. The authorities were clearly determined to squash this rebellion. Equally determined, the people of Midnapore District continued their resistance and were brutally repressed. A minor part of the tribal women played a role in the movement, but they joined the political movement from their awareness of subsistence far more than right. In Asam the hill tribal women and the women labourers of tea garden participated in the various fields of Quit India Movement. Kamala the Miri tribal women proved her bravery in this movement. Burghat in Dinajpur and Birbhum the Santali women spontaneously joined the movement. In the Surma valley under the leadership of Saralabala Devi a volunteer group of women started picketing in the court and govt. offices. In the Manbhum region of West Bengal, women from Bhumj, Santal, Khriya, Mahato, Shabar tribal society joined the movement.

Indian prostitutes were given a continuous silent role in the national movement. Many of them donated money, gold ornaments. During the Quit India Movement the police distastefully shot on the procession in Tamluk a prostitute Sabitri and her colleagues came out and meticulously nursed the injured and they bravely confronted the police force everyone in hand with a bucket of water and a cutter. Later Sabitri joined the revolutionary activity as a co-ordinator. The many women political demonstrators arrested in the Punjab were prostitutes. A prostitute organization (Beshwa samitee) in Barisal actively involved with constructive activities in the movement. In order to suppress the movement, the British government launched a final oppression on women, murder, arrest, and physical persecution continued. In addition, the events of continuous rape continued. In the only Tamluk subdivision, 74 women were raped by police military.

### Conclusion

Indian women had a glorious and significant role in the Quit India movement. Thus the involvement of women in this movement took different forms, from active protest to the organization of non-violent movement. Some of them led the movement even from the front in the other hands, thousands of them suffered and sacrificed remained unknown and unsung, their contribution should not be underestimated. The participation of women in the Quit India movement went a long way in making it a success.

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