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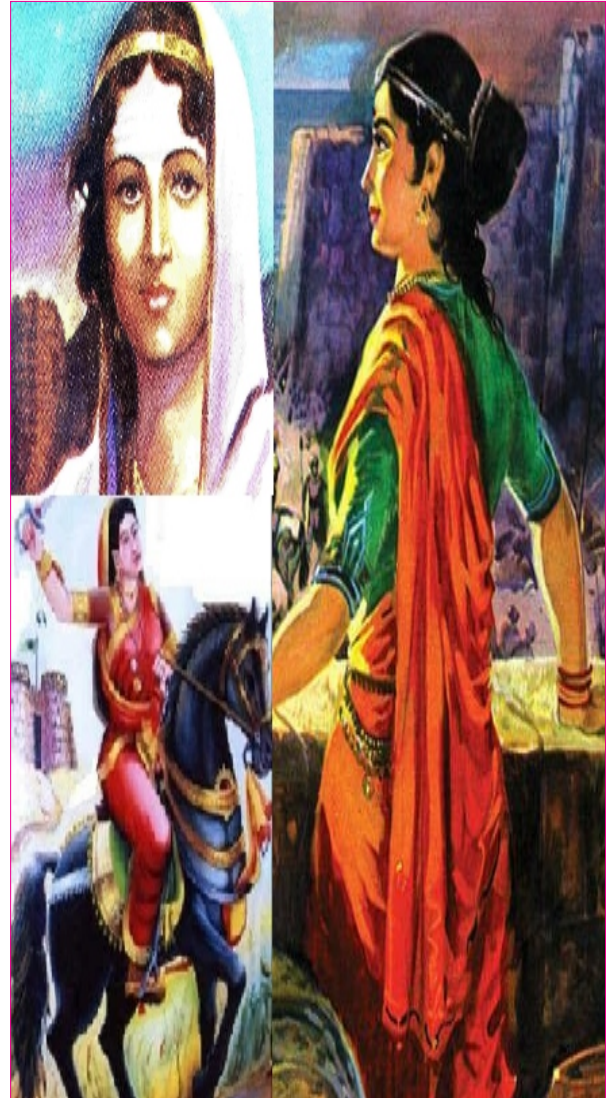
KARNATAKA WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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ABSTRACT:

The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. Both in Pre-Gandhian period and during the Gandhian period, women participated very actively and sacrificed their lives for the cause of their motherland. In the preGandhian freedom struggle women in their role as queens fought for independence of the territories. They were Belawadi Mallamma of the Swadi dynasty, Abbakka, queen of Ullal kingdom of South Kanara district, Keladi Rani Channamma, and Rani Veeramma of Keladi dynasty. The Gandhian era of freedom struggle in Karnataka began roughly from 1920. Gandhiji 's visit to Belgaum in 1924 left everlasting impression upon the freedom fighters. They also participated in individual Satyagraha, salt Satyagraha and No Tax Campaign. Women freedom fighters along with men fought for socio-economic values and to popularize democratic ideas. Queen Channamma of Kittur started an era of revolt against the British in India.



KEYWORDS: Women Freedom Fighters, Satyagraha, Socio-economic Background, Princely States of Karnataka, British Rule in Karnataka.

INTRODUCTION:

The women's movement in India took off in the 1920s, building on the 19th century social reform movement. The women's movement progressed during the period of high nationalism and the freedom struggle, both of which shaped its contours. Among the many achievements of the movement, the most significant were the constitutional guarantees of equal rights for women and universal adult suffrage in independent India. However, these guarantees did little to bring about social and material change in the lives of most Indian women. A New Women's movement, articulated to mass and popular politics, emerged in the 1970s. Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women's movement are central to

the constitution of the nation-state. This paper explores these issues by examining two debates that have rocked the women's movement and Indian society: over the Uniform Civil Code and the proposed reservation for women of seats in legislative bodies. These controversies have contributed to and bear the mark of deep cleavages within the women's movement— cleavages that reflect divisions of caste, class, and community among women. To understand the full implications of these controversies and their divisive consequences, it is essential to understand their long-term historical roots. The discussion here draws out various positions within the women's movement and arguments advanced by the government, the media, and others. The significance of a secular political constituency of women, as represented by the women's movement, is also considered.

ROLE OF WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF KARNATAKA:

The word "Freedom Movement" brings vividly to our minds the saga of sacrifices made by millions some of whom laid down their lives in a blazing train of glory. Bondage, whether social, economic or political, has always evoked intense resistance the word over. The history of foreign domination in India is replete with acts of courage, sacrifice and dedication to the cause of freedom. But over the decades, the fight for freedom of the country was continued with the same dedication, singleness of purpose and solidarity. The heroes of our freedom struggle came from every corner of the country. They did not speak one language. They did not belong to one religion or one caste. They rose above these narrow loyalties and considerations and had in tense love for their motherland and keenness to see the country free. That was the single thread of unity that bound them all. Free India has been built on untold sacrifices made by numerous individuals. 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. "Indians should be the Masters of India" was the dictum. The main aim was that the Indian had to be an equal to the world citizen.

This may called as freedom movement is related to human life, namely, traditions, economic activities, rich cultural background and goals, Gandhiji dreamt of Swaraj. In this world Swaraj means, "The wealth of the nation is being washed away, we Indians are very poor. We should come out from poverty. Although India is a rich land, people suffer from epidemic diseases. Until and unless the Britishers are driven away from India, we will not rest in peace. We should be free. We must rule ourselves and regain our soul. Therefore we need freedom".

Freedom is related to our mind and knowledge. Freedom and responsibility are two related terms. Many national leaders have understood the meaning of "Freedom movement". 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. 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 208 against the British in India. During this period of struggle, Karnataka had been mainly distributed among five different administrations, apart from more than fourteen other smaller princely states. The five administrations were the Bombay presidency, the Madras presidency, the Mysore princely State, the Nizam "'s and Coorg.

In spite of this kind of indifferent and uneven proposition, Kannada speaking people 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. "The name of Kittur Rani Channamma has become a source of inspiration to all. She was the first Indian woman warrior to fight the British". 2 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.

The Emergence of Gender Issues

Gender has been a central 'issue' in India since the colonial encounter. An overwhelming preoccupation with the "woman's question" arose from the 19th century social reform movement, crucially informed anti-colonial nationalism, and remains a point of crisis in India's cultural, social, and political space. The recognition of gender as an issue forms the basis for India's women's movement. One prominent gender concern was status—that is, the rewards and benefits that accrued to women on India's journey to self-determination, statehood, democracy, progress, modernity, and development. In 1974 the Indian government published a report, *Towards Equality*, that put status of women forcefully on the national agenda by arguing that the position of Indian women had declined, not improved, since 1911 (Committee on the Status of Women 1974). As a result development and progress became gender issues. Data on gender discrimination in employment, education, land distribution, inheritance, nutrition, and health became impossible to overlook.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

the Congress movement and the spirit of nationalism found greater expression in areas directly under the British rule. But it so happened that more than half of Karnataka area was under the rule of Indian princes. As noted earlier, besides Mysore and the Kannada Districts in the Nizam's state, there were nearly a dozen small princely states like Sondur, Savanur, Ramadurg, Jamkhandi, Mudhol, 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 upheaval 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. 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. When one speaks of freedom, one is sure to remember Karnataka rulers, namely, Kadambas, Hoyasalas, Chalukyas of Badami, Vijayanagar Kings and many more for their love and dedication for freedom. Dr. D. C. Sarkar says, "Ever since the growth of Chalukyan dynasty from 6th century, Kannadigas have played a remarkable and memorable role in the history of freedom movement".³ There is also some evidence of Karnataka Kings who also ruled in Bihar, Bengal and other parts of India. The sacrifice made by women is a unique feature of the culture of Karnataka. One can remember Attimabbe of 10th century, Akka Mahadevi of 12th century, Gangambika of Vijayanager, Onake Obavva, Rani 210 Kittur Channamma and Belavadi Mallamma. The first woman who revolted against the British rule in India in 1824 was from Karnataka and she was Rani Channamma of Kittur.⁴ The 17th century poet Sarvajna of Karnataka has eulogized, in his compositions in triplets called as "Vachanas", Kannada culture and its supremacy. He was called as the „pole star “ or Karnataka culture. He has stated in his compositions that freedom is must to one and all and that they need not have any sort of bondage. In his "Vachanas" he has very eloquently depicted the patriotism and faithfulness of the people of Karnataka. He firmly believed that one must sacrifice for the sake of his country.

PROMINENT WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF KARNATAKA:

Women Satyagrahis 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 sacrificed there all to achieve their goal. The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. Both in Pre-Gandhian period and during the Gandhian period, women participated very actively and sacrificed their lives for the cause of their motherland. 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. The freedom struggle from 1920 to 1947 was led by Mahatma Gandhi, whose leadership attracted men and women of all walks of life. Gandhiji's visit to Belgaum in 1924 left everlasting impression upon the freedom fighters, and many women became staunch followers of Mahatma Gandhi.

WOMEN ORGANISATIONS IN KARNATAKA:

Today women exploitation is decreasing. The main reason is women organization. These women organizations enlightened the minds of women folk in Karnataka. They are coming out and struggling for women rights, freedom, equality, empowerment and emancipation through various women organizations.

Women groups have also been led to believe that the bureaucracy is totally apathetic ifnot against, towards women's issues. It cannot & would not play a positive role in participatory development. It is too mammoth & formidable & there is a risk of getting lost in such a labyrinthine body. This impression is not totally correct. Some of these women fail to understand intricacies of rules & procedures needed for the proper functioning of the government. They are necessary even if they delay decisions making sometimes. These chasm between the government & the voluntary, autonomous women's organizations have been an unhealthy feature and neither of the parties have been benefited from it.

Since hundred years history, women movement is less in Karnataka than other states in India. In Karnataka, Bellaiy Siddhamma Nagamma Pateel, Subbamma Joisha, T.Sunandhamma, Yashodharamma Dasappa, Nagarathnamma Hiremata, Padmavathi Bidari, Jayadevi Tayee Ligade, Shakunthala Kurthakoti, Siddamati Milar, Lakshamma, Balyathanda Muddhamma, Mysore Subbhamma, Gauramma Venkataramayya, Umabhai Coondapur, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya & many others took major role in freedom movemen.

In Karnataka social development section, the most important women names are Nanjanagood Thirumalamba, Bangalore Kalyanamma & 'Vanitha Seva Samaj' of Dharwad. Thirumalamba has worked for the all round development ofthe women through her paper 'Sati Hithaishini', Kalyanamma has brought 'Saraswati' a monthly paper for about 42 yrs to uplift the women folk. She has started 'Sharada Stree Samaj' in 1913. 'Vanitha Samaj' came into existence in March 1928 in Dharwad has provided proper training & education in almost airfields with the assistance of All India Women's Movement.

CONCLUSION:

The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. Women Freedom Fighters, Satyagraha, Socio-economic Background, Princely States of Karnataka, British Rule in Karnataka Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. They are coming out and struggling for women rights, freedom, equality, empowerment and emancipation through various women organizations.

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