
Contribution of Woman Fighters in Indian Freedom Struggle in 1857-1858

Dr. Yashpal Singh

M.A. & Ph.D. in History, Principal, Govt. College Julana (Jind), Haryana, India

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Abstract

The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of women. The sacrifices made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirits and undaunted tortures, exploitation. Courage and faced various 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. 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.

Keywords— Freedom Struggle, Exploitation, Courage, Satyagraha, Freedom Fighters.

INTRODUCTION

The first war of independence (1857-1858) it was the first general Agitation against the rule of British East India Company. The doctrine of lapse, issues of cartridges greased with cow and pig fat to Indian soldiers at Meerut triggered the fire. Further, the introduction of British system of education and a number of social reform had infuriated a very wide section of the Indian people, soon became a widespread agitation and posed a grave challenge to the British rule. India has a glorious history of her woman fighting for country freedom. The Rajput women exhibited a rare Patriotism and heroism, even self sacrifice and self immolation¹. The upheaval of 1857- 1858 was the first organized armed attempt by the Indians to free themselves from the political grip of English². The revolt of 1857 spread to many cities and towns of Northern India. As the soldiers fought bravely, few women also participated in the struggle, though their names are well known in the annals of Indian freedom struggle. Some famous women are Begam Hazrat Mahal, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rani Tace Bai etc.

Begam Hazrat Mahal:

Wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the deposed ruler of Avadh, rose in Revolt against the British rule and became one of the principal leaders of the great revolt of 1857-3. She was the primary figures in bringing about this insurrection in Delhi which was not only discouraging but was also ruinous for her designs. She tried to encourage the soldiers and is reported to have appeared on the battle field on Feb. 25, 1858, on an elephant⁴.

Rani Lakshmi Bai

Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi (1835 -1858) has taken a vow to take revenge on the British for their annexation of her state after the death of her husband Raja Gangadhar Rao. She took up arms against the British army. Governor General had declared a prize of Rs. 20,000 on her head. Rani Lakshmi Bai was the most powerful leader of the revolt. She fought to the last and died on the battle field on June 18, 1858. Sir Hume Rose described her as "the best and the bravest of her leader"⁶.

Rani Tace Bai:

Rani of Joloun, in Central India. She joined the causes of the insurgents in 1857. She fled from Joloun in April 1858, On the Fall of Jhansi and later submitted to the British. She was deported to Monghyr in Bihar, along with her son, and all her jewellery was confiscated⁷.

Avantibai:

When the revolt of 1857 broke out, Avanti Bai raised and led an Army of 4000. Citation needed her first battle with the British took place in the village of Kheri near Mandla, where she and her Army were able to defeat the British force. However stung by the defeat the British came back with vengeance and launched an attack on Ramgarh. Avantibai moved to the Hills of safety. The British army set fire to Ramgarh and turned to Dehargarh to attack the queen. Avantibai resorted to Guerilla Warfare to fend off the British army. She took the sword from guard sword and pierced it into herself and thus committing suicide on 20th March 1858 when facing almost certain defeat in battle⁸.

The other woman leaders of the outbreak were Rani Jindan, Baiza Bai, Chauhan Rani, Devi Chaudhrai, Rani of Tulsipur, Zeenat Mahal, Tapaswini Maharani and many other some of them led troops to the battle field and fought while others expected suffering and privations, imprisonments and death. India failed in a political attempt to shake off the foreign rule in 1857. This failure Indians realize that it was necessary to have the unification of the country have an all India organization and to create social and political.

Awakening before independence could be achieved. Social freedom is inter linked with political freedom and for the progress of the country both are the necessary requisite⁹.

CONCLUSION

These are some important names of women who actually participated in India's first freedom struggle 1857. Many other women also participated in this struggle indirectly by helping the soldiers, Nawabs and other heroes of freedom struggle. It is confirmed that some women work engaged in transforming the information from one place to another with the help of Gulab, Roti and by other means. Thus in short it is proved that women were equally participated in India's freedom struggle of 1857.

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