

"Education for Knowledge, Science and Culture"

- Shikshanmaharshi Dr. Bapuji Salunkhe



SHRI SWAMI VIVEKANAND SHIKSHAN SANSTHA'S  
**VIVEKANAND COLLEGE, KOLHAPUR**  
(AUTONOMOUS)



**SPECIAL ISSUE OF  
VIVEK RESEARCH E-JOURNAL**

ISSN-2521-8848

APRIL, 2023

Proceeding of ICSSR Sponsored  
National Seminar on



**CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN  
BOMBAY PRESIDENCY  
TO THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN INDIA**

Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

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Dr. R.R.Kumbhar

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VOL. VII

ISSUE II

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**"HISTORICAL STUDY OF SOME FORGOTTEN AND DISREGARDED WOMEN  
REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE MUMBAI PROVINCES"**

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**Abstract:**

In ancient India, during the Vedic period, women were able to get religious education. According to the Rigveda, the ideal education is one that makes a person self-reliant and altruistic. Education is a means of social transformation. However, in India, the ultimate goal of women's education was to prepare them for the roles of ideal mother and wife. By taking away their basic right to education, the social status of Indian women suffered since ancient time.

In India, women were given an important place in social events and celebrations. Women were respected as a mother goddess, in sculptures, paintings and elevated. By denying them right to education, women were made financially dependent and their right to self-determination was not recognized. As a result, position of women became weakened.

The present research paper aims to undertake a historical study of some forgotten and disregarded female personalities in the Mumbai region from the perspective of Indian freedom struggle and history. Studying the personalities of women during the Indian independence movement is crucial because Indian women have played a significant role in revolutionary activities, as freedom fighters, in Gandhian movements, Constitution creation, labor movements, social, religious and educational reforms, and have contributed their efforts and responsibilities towards achieving independence for the country by adopting their own methods and techniques.

**Keywords:** Vedic Period, Self-Reliant, Altruistic, Sculptures, Gandhian Movement...

**Introduction:**

Women played a significant role in the freedom struggle in India, including in the Bombay Presidency, which included present-day Maharashtra, Gujarat, and parts of Karnataka. As pandit Jawaharlal Nehru says, you can tell condition of nation by looking at the status of its women. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few centuries. From equal status to men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful.

Indian independence movement was the biggest movement in the world, during which people from all strata of society, irrespective of their gender, caste and class, came together and fought for independence. This led to the British colonial rulers taking notice and eventually leaving India. However, although women played a significant role in this movement, they were often neglected and their contributions were not recognized. In the period between 1975-85, both Indian and international women's organizations wrote extensively about the contributions of Indian women in the struggle for independence, but

this writing mainly focused on the participation of upper-class women, while the contributions of working-class, farmer and other marginalized women were overlooked. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to study the contribution of marginalized and neglected women from the Mumbai region in the Indian independence struggle.

During the early years of the Indian National Congress, from 1885 to 1920, women's participation in the movement was restricted to upper-class women. Mahatma Gandhi became aware of the power of women and their abilities during his time in South Africa, where Kasturba Gandhi, along with other women like Shrimati Chhaganlal Gandhi, Shrimati Jaya Kaur, Shrimati Haribhai Patel, Shrimati Rajgovindra participated in satyagraha.

In 1904, under the leadership of Ramabai Ranade, women from various regions of India came together in the All India Women's Conference and later participated in the Vangabhang Movement. In the Jan Andolan initiated by Gandhi, women from the Mumbai region participated in large numbers. Educated women from Parsi and Christian societies showed great participation in the beginning. Later, women from all sections of society, including the general and the Dalit communities, adopted this movement and the idea of satyagraha. According to the desire of Mahatma Gandhi, Avantikabai Gokhale, Perring Captain, Hausa Mehta, Jayashree Ramji, Krishnabai Ghumkar, and Kamal Bhagwat were included in this movement.

#### **Objectives of Research Paper:**

1. To evaluate the contributions of women in the Gandhian movement in the Mumbai region.
2. To study the role of women workers in the labor movement in the Mumbai region.
3. To analyze the social and educational contributions of women in the Mumbai region.
4. To recognize and acknowledge the overlooked and neglected contributions of women in the Mumbai region during the Indian independence struggle.

#### **Research methodology:**

For the present research paper, a historical and descriptive research methodology has been adopted. The primary and secondary resources from the Shivaji University Library, Kolhapur archives and e-libraries have been utilized. Additionally, important books, research essays, Ph. D. dissertations and internet sources have been used as references for this research.

#### **Construction of the Bombay Presidency-**

In 1818, after defeating the second Bajirao Peshwa, Mount Stuart Elphinstone began the British rule in Maharashtra. As he was knowledgeable about the Maratha rule, the Company Government appointed him as the Commissioner of the province that was won. The province that was won from the second Bajirao Peshwa covered an area of 50,000 square miles and had a population of 4 million, and was named the Deccan Commission. The Pune, Ahmednagar, Khandesh, Dharwad and Satara divisions were created within this province. A chief officer was appointed as the collector for each division, who was trusted by the people.

In this way, Mount Stuart carried out the administrative restructuring of the province won and made decisions in the interest of the people. A district magistrate collector was appointed for each division, who had the power of administration, justice and

education. The collector was also given the authority of revenue and property rights. The tradition of calling the collector's office as "Huzur Office" was started.

#### **Bombay women in Quit India & Revolutionary movement:**

In the Indian revolutionary movement, many women revolutionaries sacrificed their lives to achieve independence for the country alongside men. Among them were Preetilata Waddedar, Kalpana Datta, Veena Das, Sudhie Chowdhary, Suhagini Ganguly, Nagrani Gidlu, Ujwala Mujumdar, Yesubai Savarkar, and Yamunabai Savarkar.

Under the leadership of Krantisinh Nana Patil, the formation of the anti-government movement (Pratisarkar) took place in Satara during the 1942 fight for independence. During this time, Leela Tai Patil and Rajamati Patil also participated from Bombay Presidency. Leela Tai Patil protested at the Amalner court and was imprisoned in Yerwada jail. After her release, she led the Kundal revolutionary group of women and gave them training to fight as part of the "Tufan Army" (Tufan Sena).

Rajamati Patil from Wai taluka hoisted the flag at the Tilak Chowk in Solapur while she was studying. She also provided arms and ammunition to the revolutionaries in the government's crackdown in Goa, Belgaum, and Nashik. She was also part of the police crackdown on the British in Manmad. Hence, she was noted as a revolutionary woman of the anti-government movement.

At this time, revolutionary women were engaged in activities such as providing weapons and ammunition, delivering letters while hiding in the underground, hiding revolutionaries, providing food, and even offering them shelter. They also faced imprisonment for their actions.

#### **Participation of Women in the Labor Movement:**

After Lokmanya Tilak was given a six-year sentence by the British government in 1908, Mumbai's dock workers went on a six-day strike, during which women expressed their dissatisfaction by throwing stones. The All India Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920. Dr. Annie Besant of Theosophical Society was present at the first convention. At this time, women's representatives from Maharashtra, Avantikabai Gokhale and Nagutai Bhosale, participated.

#### **Empowerment of Women during the Colonial Era:**

The British provided education to women in India, which led to the dissemination of knowledge about women's rights movements in Western countries among Indian social reformers. The British introduced various laws related to women, including laws related to widow remarriage, the Sharda Bill, the Patel Bill, and the right to inheritance for women. These legal reforms helped in the empowerment of women.

#### **Women's Organisations during the Colonial Era:**

Due to access to higher education and awareness about their political rights, many women from the upper class and intellectuals entered politics during the British rule. This led to the formation of various women's organisations and the growth of nationalism among women.

Following are some women organizations during Colonial India...

Sr. No	Founder	Name of Women Organization	Establishment Year	Place
1.	Pandita Ramabai	Arya Mahila Samaj	1882	Pune
2.	Krantiveer Babasaheb Savarkar	Aatmnisht Yuvati Sangh	1905	Nashik
3.	Sarladevi Chaudhrani	Bharat Stri Mahamandal	1910	Ahmadabad
4.	Dr. Anne Besant	Home Rule League	1916	Madras
5.	Avantikabai Gokhale	Hindu Mahila Sabha	1918	Mumbai
6.	Dr. N.S. Hardikar	Hindustani Sevika Dal	1930	Mumbai
7.	Nauroji Patak	Stri Zartosti Mandal		Mumbai
8.	Mother of Navaj Shaha- Amir-UI-Nisa	Anjuman-e-Khavatin-e-Islam		Punjab

Dr. N S. Hardikar established the 'Hindustani Sevika Dal' in June 1930, with Captain Kalyan Sayyad as its leader. Kamal Sohoni, Kusum Sohoni, Krishna Sardesai, and Kaveri Chaudhari also worked hard for this organization. The Sisterhood and Women's Volunteer Corps of Congress-loving women in Pune played an important role in their struggle for independence. Prema Kantak, Godhulai Parulekar started the student movement during this time.

Due to the women's organizations formed during this time, awareness about women's existence and their role started to emerge among women. This helped India in its struggle for independence.

#### Concluding Remarks:

Throughout the Indian independence struggle, many women have made significant contributions. Among these, the struggles of women workers in Mumbai's textile mills, sugar factories, and pottery industries, as well as the many satyagrahas led by tribal and peasant women, are particularly noteworthy. However, the contributions of women to the Indian freedom struggle and the feminist movement have been largely overlooked in Indian history. For example, the important contributions made by Sagunabai Kshirsagar, the first trained female teacher in Mahatma Phule's school, and Fatima Sheikh, the first trained female teacher in a normal school, who was a Muslim social reformer, have been largely ignored. Similarly, the work done by Savitribai Rode, the head of the Satyashodhak Samaj in Pune, and Tanubai Birje, who published the Satyashodhak Samaj's newspaper, has been

overlooked. It is important to study the work of women in these many feminist and social movements.

It is essential to understand and study the work of women from various backgrounds, including self-respecting women, women from oppressed communities, women from farming, tribal and laboring backgrounds, who are the backbone of such societies.

Despite granting basic rights to Indian women in the constitution after independence, there has not been a significant improvement in their status. Practices such as sati, child marriage, polygamy, and the caste system that perpetuated the symbol of women as slaves have not been completely eradicated. The society's perspective towards women has not changed much in this era of modernization, and society has only recently recognized gender equality through laws. Indian events have established that both men and women are entitled to full freedom and equal rights, and this recognition has provided women with security in cases of violence.

The constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by State (Article 15 (1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16) equal pay for equal work (Article 39 (d)).

However, women's exploitation is still prevalent in male-dominated cultures. Literature, writing, lectures, Seminars, discussion forums, and dialogue can help break down and ban these problems, and women's issues can be researched for influential and long-lasting solutions.

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