



Women's Position in the Quit India Movement of Assam

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Abstract:

After the Non-Cooperation and Civil-Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement starting on 9th August 1942 has normally been observed as the third large movement of the people of India for freedom from the independence of British regime. The Quit India Movement was a mass upsurge of unparalleled proportions which accelerated the liberation of the country. Throughout the Quit India Movement the people of Assam like that of other parts of India offered optimistic reply to the call of Gandhi's '*Do or Die*'. In respect of caste, creed, religion, belief, gender and community people from all areas came forward to the national call; a small number of victims and thousands faced police atrocities and, hence, made extraordinary involvement to the victory of the mass movement.

Keywords:

Women, Position, Quit India Movement, Assam.

Introduction:

For the duration of the course of the Quit India movement (1942), the women of Assam like that of other areas of India offered constructive reply to the term of Gandhi's '*Do or Die*'. Women from all areas came forward to the national call, a little became martyr and thousands confronted police atrocities and, consequently, made incredible interest to the triumph of the rare movement. In this course of struggle, the women of Nowgong district played an outstanding responsibility. Numerous women were found to be holding Congress flags and shouting Congress slogans in many regions of Nagaon who confronted rigorous police atrocities.

Review of Related Literature:

1. Dr Rekha Rani Sarma Puzari & Kazumi Mazane (2001) in the research entitled "*Role of Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle of India*" highlight that from the ancient period the women of India had been taking vigorous part in politics. In the period of Vedas women like Gargi and Maitrayee played energetic task in Indian politics.



2. Prof. Meeta Deka (2013) in her book titled “*Women's Agency and Social Change: Assam and Beyond*” indicates on diverse domination, power relations and philosophies embedded in the complex yet mutually dependent social, political, economic and legal structures, and women's subordination therein.

Statement of the Problem:

There are so many researches on the Quit India Movement. However, the women’s position and their numerous responsibilities in the Quit India Movement is of great value from historical, sociological, political and psychological view points.

Objective of the Study:

The very objectives of the paper are:-

1. To portray the actual happenings in the Quit India Movement.
2. To highlight the Women’s Position in the Quit India Movement of Assam.

Research Questions:

3. What are the actual happenings in the Quit India Movement?
4. What is the Women’s Position in the Quit India Movement of Assam?

Importance of the Study:

The present study is very much important since the women play a vital part in the Quit India Movement. Males and females equally fought against the British regime to gain India Independent.

Methodology of the Study:

The method of this paper is historical base cum exploratory in nature. To provide the cause of the research, both conventional and analytical methods of study are followed. An attempt has been made to emphasize the archival data on historical backdrop. Several data are compiled from the autobiographies of a number of the renowned figures of the colonial Assam. The data also collected from research papers, research articles, edited volumes, journals, paper clips, periodicals, newspapers etc.

Discussion and Results:

1. Since the National level organizations like the *Bharat Mahila Parisad* (1904), *Bharat Stri Mahamandal* (1910) and the *Women’s Indian Association* (1917) had no sections in



Assam, a number of progressive Assamese women felt the requirement for the establishment of women organization in the region.

2. In the year 1926, *Assam Mahila Samiti* was founded under the control of Chandraprabha Saikiani with its branches in numerous parts of the region with the missions of enlisting the participation of a large number of women in different kinds of actions of the freedom movement in an organized way and highlighted the need for boycotting foreign goods
3. Throughout the year 1942-43, the Assamese women in general took a most important part with their male counterparts.
4. Under the control of leading organizers and patriots like Nabinchandra Bordoloi, Tarunram Phukan, Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya and Chandrakumar Agarwalla etc. some progressive women came out to take part in the fight.
5. *Mrityu Bahini* (Death-corps) and *Shanti Bahinis* (Peace-corps) were formed in different districts of Assam and women joined in these organizations in large numbers.
6. The number of women Satyagrahis increased steadily and by the end of 1940, the number of such women from Guwahati, Goalpara, Mangaldai, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Golaghat and Nowgong took a vital part.
7. Women leaders like Hemantakumari Devi Bordoloi, Poetess Nalinibala Devi, Bijuli Phukan, Sumitra Bhattacharyya, Kiranmayee Agarwalla, Snehalata Devi Baruah, Chandraprova Devi Saikiani and Rajbala Das who was the secretary of *Dibrugarh Women's Congress Committee* of those days assumed widespread tours from village to village to teach and inspire the people.
8. Even though most of the women of Assam joined in the movement on non-violent lines, a few of them, nevertheless, became betrothed in underground and extremist actions. It is very important that, in Nowgong, Jaimati Saikia of Chakalaghat village, assisted with the revolutionary group to burn the Bebejia Road Bridge on 25/26 August, 1942.
9. The arrest of the Congress leaders, the women took charge of the conditions and transmitted on the movement by bearing the brunt of the wrath of the Raj. When complete police Raj was instituted in Assam and the police was given limitless power of subjugation who did not vacillate to adopt all probable coercive steps to demoralize the people, the women of Assam showed exemplary courage.
10. Girls at the age of teenage, pregnant women could not flee from military brutality.
11. The women of the Nowgong district had to countenance vicious police atrocities and it is said that they were subjected to cruel brutalities

Findings of the Study:

1. With the limited scope and restrictions, the role played by the women of the Brahmaputra Valley in the Freedom Struggle was indeed remarkable.
2. Their involvement in the movement became massive in scale and similar in nature with



- that of the male participants. It was the *Assam Mahila Samiti*, formed in 1926, which provided the launching pad for women's participation in a more organised manner.
3. In the 1942 upheaval, in terms of their courage and sacrifice the women of Assam and particularly Nagaon district perhaps surpassed all other women of the country.
 4. When most of the Congress leaders were arrested, the women took charge of the situation and carried on the movement by bearing the brunt of the wrath of the Raj and their sufferings knew no bounds.
 5. The very reality that, fifteen women of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam laid down their lives, for the cause of the movement between 1921 to 1947, alone speaks volumes of their remarkable contribution towards the attainment of Swaraj for India. But the women's participation in different activities of the freedom movement and their success against the British rule hardly received the priority it deserved.

Conclusion:

The women's role in the Quit India Movement has its historical and political importance. The '*sacred foundations*' of women's repression in Assamese culture traced to historical roots as highlighted in legends, folklore and spiritual forms have defensible male supremacy in the patriarchal family, caste system and other socio-economic structures. Unhurried alteration took place, particularly in colonial times, marking a change concurrently in gender relationships and the transition of the woman in Assam.

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