Preface

The freedom movement of India has a rich legacy with the contributions made by many women of eminence through different streams opted by them. Being equal lovers of freedom and liberty with those of men, they plunged into the courageous deeds and notable accomplishments to fight against the British Colonial rule.

The present thesis entitled "Women's Participation in Freedom Movement of India" aims at assessing the role and contribution of women in the freedom movement of India broadly between the years 1920-47. Although some of the women from English educated elite class had joined the Non-Cooperation movement (1920-22) launched by Gandhi but neither their presence was remarkable in activities nor their participation was in a massive way. That is why the present work starts with the Civil Disobedience movement (an era of mass participation in the movement) alongwith a historical background of women's participation in Non-Cooperation movement alongwith their involvement in various social organizations formed in the 19th century and early decades of 20th century.

Undoubtedly, the First War of Indian Independence was fought in 1857 but went futile. However, the contribution made by some eminent women like Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Rani Ramgarh, Tace Bai of Jalour, Rani Digambor Kaur etc.
have also been discussed in the chapter first i.e. Historical Background.

In the history of India's freedom movement, the year 1930 marks in fact, a turning point especially in two ways. Firstly, the masses including women from all walks of society (except the people from underprivileged section) in large number plunged into Gandhian non-violent movement and, secondly, the militant politics also attracted the young generation of both male and female between the age of (17-30 years) wherein they fought against the colonial rule with arms and ammunition. Besides, the women made all feasible contribution in all the four streams viz. Gandhian, Revolutionary, Leftiest and of Religious organisation.

The present thesis is based on an analytical study towards the understanding of the participation and how the pioneers of socio-religious movement in pre-Gandhian as well as Gandhian phase overcome the forces of traditions, illiteracy, poverty and rural isolation, and how the women of India along with some western women set aside their family problems, left their home and purdah and participation in freedom struggle of India. The response of British Government towards the movement in general and women participants in particular including all the repressive methods, tactics, punishments, etc. have also been given due consideration.

There are not enough books which specially deal with role of women of different streams in the freedom
movement of India. Man Mohan Kaur's work: *Role of Women in the Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)* assesses the role of women played in Gandhian stream only. Some states have also been left without incorporation of the activities of the women in such states. Another book by Vijay Agnew entitled: *Elite Women in Indian Politics* though includes the role made by extremist women but has left the women of leftist and other streams and religious organizations. Moreover, this book has been prosecuted with a nationalist approach. Another book entitled: *Gandhi, women and the National Movement (1920-47)* by Anoop Taneja assesses the role played by the women in Gandhian stream only. Besides, he has also left various aspects in his research work. Some books have been written on regional and single state like provincial participation such Manju Verma: *The Role of Women in the Freedom Movement of Punjab (1919-1947)*, Suruchi Thaper – Bijorkert: *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voice (1930-42)*; and V. Rajinder Raju's book *Role of Women in India's Freedom Struggle* deal with several movements organised in different provinces such as Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh etc.

The whole thesis has been divided into seven chapters.

The First chapter: *Introduction* deals with the inception of socio-religious organizations and the social awareness programmes launched by them including Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthna Samaj and women organizations Sakhi Samiti, Sarda Sadan etc. Besides, the
involvement of eminent women in anti-partition of Bengal and in Non-Cooperation movement has also been assessed as a historical background in this chapter.

The Second chapter Women in Gandhian Movement-I deals with their role from 1930 to 1939. In this chapter, the activities of Gandhian women performed in regard to Civil Disobedience Movement have been examined. Their participation in the Salt Satyagraha and boycotting of foreign goods and taxes, picketing at liquor and other foreign cloth shops popularisation of khaddar and spinning of charkha etc. Covered under constructive programme of Gandhi have been analysed. The repressive policy and tactics adopted by the British Government including lathi charge as well imprisonment of women volunteers also have been included in this chapter.

The Third chapter : Women in Gandhian Movement-II covers the period from 1939-1947. It contains the suffarate movement led by eminent women leaders like Annie Besant, Margret Cousin, Sarojini Naidu, etc. under various women organisations like W.I.A., N.C.W., A.I.W.C. etc. have been assessed. The nationwide percentage of their qualification as electors in number declared by government for elections to various provincial assemblies have been give due care. Besides, the involvement of nationalist women in Individual Satyagrah and, later on, Quit-India Movement has also been examined. Side by side, the repressive policy of British Government and punishment given to women leaders and other Gandhian women have also been analysed in this chapter.
The Fourth Chapter: **Women in Revolutionary Movement** deals exclusively with the women who opted the militant politics and performed their revolutionary activities using arms and ammunition. Their organisational activities including raids on government buildings, armouries, British clubs and attacks on British administrators and offices have been examined. The prominent revolutionary organisations along with the activities performed by their activists women like *Atmanistha Yovati Sangh* in Maharashtra and in Bengal *Anushilan Samiti, Yugantar Samiti, Sree Sangh, Chattogram Revolutionary Party* etc. and in U.P. and Punjab women involved in *H.S.R.A., Naujawan Bharat Sabha* etc. have been discussed in this chapter.

The Fifth chapter: **Women in Leftist Movement** analyses the participation of women belonging to Communist Party and various other left organisations such as Kirti Kisan Parties and Peasant organizations, Students' organizations as well as trade unions etc. The struggle of peasants launched against feudal lords prominently among them like *Tebhaga* and *Telangana* movements and activities of students' organisation for national politics and movements of Industrial workers have also been included in this chapter.

The Sixth chapter: **Women in Religious Organisations** mainly pertains to the activities of Muslim women who were earlier engaged in *Khilafat* movement and Non-Cooperation movement. Thereafter, their contribution made through *Anjuman-i-Khwatin-i-Islam* (a prominent
Muslim Organisation) has been analysed in regard to the upliftment programmes of Muslim women and services rendered to national movement. Their conversion to Muslim League has also been discussed in this chapter.

The Seventh chapter: **Conclusion** is the summing up of the whole research work. It also includes the findings of the present research work on logical parts in proper historical perspective.

I personally express a high sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. B.D. Yadav, Professor, Department of History, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak and his family for constant help, co-operation and motivation in the completion of this work. Without his meticulous guidance and help, it would not have been possible for me to complete this research work.

I am extremely thankful to late Professor S.P. Shukla, by the grace and suggestion of whom the topic of present research work was chosen. He had been a constant source of inspiration and instrumental in preparing the framework of my research work.

I also feel grateful to my husband Dr. Vijay Kumar, Reader, Department of History, M.D.U., Rohtak who took personal interest and pain in collection of material and giving suggestions in drafting my thesis. I am also thankful to Professor Amar Singh, Deptt. of History who has been helping me in several ways.
I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank to all the learned and respected teachers of the Department of History such as Professor Manmohan Kumar, Professor Nirmal Kashyap, Dr. (Ms.) Urvashi Dalal, Reader, Dr. Bindu Mattoo, Reader, Dr. Bhpender Yadav, Reader, and Dr. Jaiveer Dhankar, Reader who have been kind enough to give me some good suggestions during my pre-Ph.D. submission seminar.

I sincerely feel obliged to Mr. Arjun Singh, research scholar, Department of History, who has been very helping me in collection of research material from different libraries and research institutes and getting types and checking the proof of my thesis.

The non-teaching staff such as Ms. Madhu Steno, Kuldeep and Krishna peons of my department also deserves mention in extending their valuable co-operation to me on many occasions.

I am also thankful to the staff members of M.D. University, Library, Rohtak, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi, National Achives of India, Library, New Delhi, Kurukshetra University, Library, Kurukshetra, Govt. College, Dubaldhan, (Jhajjar) Library (Women Cell) also helped me a lot in collection of study material at times without showing any reluctance.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Sh. O.P. Ahlawat, Principal, Govt. College Dubaldhan (Jhajjar) and my colleagues and friends Dr. Bimla Deswal, Ms. Rekha Malhotra, Dr. Kiran Sharma, Mrs. Renu Rana, Dr. Ashok
Kumar, Dr. Poonam Agghi, Sh. Sunit Mukerji, Dr. Anil Kumari, Dr. Aprajita, Dharam Kaur, Mrs. Deepak, Mrs. Savita and non-teaching staff including Sh. Rajbir, Sr. Harender, Sh. Ravikant Sharma and Librarian Sh. Kapur Singh for their kind advice and help.

My parents Sh. Gopi Chand and Smt. Kamla Devi and parents-in-law Sh. Mahender Kumar and Smt. Jiwani Devi deserve special mention who always showed their affection upon me in the completion of my higher studies including the present research work.

Finally my loving children Pratibha, Vivek and Vaibhav also deserve special thank who helped me sparing time from domestic in the completion of the present work.

Lastly, I am also thankful to Mr. Deepak Kumar and Sh. Satish Kumar for typing my thesis accurately and efficiently.

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