Chapter- 1
Introduction

Soon after India got independence, the scholars interpreted India's freedom struggle from different points of view. In the colonial India some scholar-leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, A.C. Majumdar, Pattabhi Sitaramaya¹, Surender Nath Banarjee,² C.F. Andrews, etc. had come with their writings and later on supplemented by others such as B.R. Nanda³, Bisheswar Prasad, Amlesh Tripathi⁴, Tara Chand⁵, R. C. Majumdar⁶ etc. Their works throw light on the nationalist historiography of freedom struggle of India. As propounder of the nationalist approach, these scholars and leaders came out with an effective notion that the modern historical struggle in India developed as a unified and collective opposition based on national feelings as a whole against the British colonial rule.

The nationalist historiography was developed by the English educated class which was the product of new educational institutions emerged during the second half of 19th century. The educated middle class played an important role in the creations of several organisations which inculcated the national sentiments in India. The nationalist school, however, has been criticised with an argument that it uncritically emphasised the glorifies of the past⁷. Besides, it also overlooks the role of various social groups in the freedom movement. Moreover, the inevitable aspect of women's participation in the movement has also been left without addressed⁸.
Another theoretical interpretation was earliest put forward by colonial administrators—Viceroys like Dufferin, Curzon, Minto and Secretary of State India, George Hamilton, etc\textsuperscript{9}. Their ideas were later on developed in 1960s and 1970 by the historians such as J.H Broomfield\textsuperscript{10}, Anil Seal\textsuperscript{11}, C.A. Bayly\textsuperscript{12}, B.R. Tamils\textsuperscript{13}, David Washbrook\textsuperscript{14} and Judith Brown\textsuperscript{15} who are known as the Cambridge Schools. Keeping in mind the understanding of nationalist movement, they not only disapproved the struggle as a freedom movement against colonial rule in principle but also rejects the very notion of the emergence of nationalism. For them, colonialism was nothing but a foreign rule. They even did not consider that India was in making as a nation. India was, for them, merely an amalgamation of various interest groups based on religions, castes, communities. They claimed that it was, in fact, a disappointed educated middle class which was using the notion, of nationalism in order to fight against the British Raj. Moreover, they also did not approve the Indian national movement as a mass movement but a national politics orginated only around the needs and interests of colonial elites that trained the native population in the ethics of parliamentary democracy and then handing over power to them in gradual doses\textsuperscript{16}.

Some of them later identified themselves with the 'new' Cambridge School like Anil Seal, J. Gallagahr, etc\textsuperscript{17}. The national movement for them merely a colonial politics aimed at defending the vested interest of organised groups that constituted educated elites. So or as the consideration
of national leaders was concerned, they project them as 'middle-men'.

Both of the schools viz. the Cambridge and nationalist share similar view points at least on two aspects. One, that the Indian elite led the people in the struggle and the second one is that the aspect of women's participation in this long lasting struggle is almost missing in both of the historiography. It seems that their interest rested some where else otherwise such a vast account of women organisations which were involved in nationalist politics from the middle of 19th century and sufficiently addressed women issues would have certainly be examined in their discourse in regard to women's contribution. Further, there were many instances that shed adequate light on the participation of women in the national movement by various types of their activities, be it their passive role as mothers, sister and wives or active participation through Gandhian Constructive Programme or overt revolutionary/militant activities against colonial rule.

The third type of historiography whose frame work is closed to marxist analysis is popularly known as Subaltern School which came into emergence during the 1980's\(^\text{18}\). The intellectual discourses made by scholars including Ganendra Pandey\(^\text{19}\), Ranjit Guha\(^\text{20}\), S. Henningham\(^\text{21}\), Shahid Amin\(^\text{22}\), David Hardiman not only dismiss all the previous historical writings as elitist, mechanical or over materialistic, and instead focused on 'marginal' and non-elitist groups and their 'autonomous' resistance at various
stages in the Indian nationalist politics. As per their findings, neither Indian masses came together as a joint venture against the Imperial rule nor the Indian national movement as such ever developed. This school rather divides the struggle into two different strands: the elite and subaltern. Within the 'elite' sphere, it draws on a distinction between foreign (British) and indigenous elite groups (feudal princes/aristocracies, Congress leaders and other leaders). It further lays emphasis (while making observation of the national struggle) on the real anti-imperialist struggle made subaltern Indian masses on the one hand and the so-called i.e. fake struggle of elite class on the other. In this way, it has rightly been observed that this school, some how, seems to get closed with the new-cambridge school with an extended view point.

The Marxist historians have also dealt with the national movement of India. Having started with the discourses of A.R. Desai and Rajni Palm Dutt, this framework was developed later on by Bipan Chandra and his students. Contrary to the imperialist school, they do consider the long lasting struggle as freedom struggle of Indian masses along with emerging nationalism against colonial rule. However, their interest rests more in the growing awareness of class consciousness among various interest groups and working class politics centring round peasants agitations and trade unionism of Industrial workers. Moreover, beside other three schools of thought, they have also broadly kept themselves away from
uncovering the contribution of women in the freedom movement of India.

The present work aims at understanding the contribution of all sections of women towards the freedom struggle of India in accordance with the nationalist approach. As the available sufficient research material required to examine their role as per different streams, this research work is an humble attempt to examine how the women and students, as pioneers, played a vital role in the same context. Whether they were part of urban educated elite class or illiterate traditions bound or patriarchy bound rural women all of their multifacet activities have been thoroughly analysed. Besides, the peasant women, the landless labour class women as well as women working as laboures in Industries all have undergone a critical examination so far as their commitment to the saga of sacrifice and participation in the freedom struggle is concerned.

Till the early decades of the nineteenth century, there was hardly any socio-political awakening in the country. A number of social ills like child marriage, female infanticide, purdah, Sati dowry, prohibition of widow remarriage, indignities suffered by widows, etc. had started manifesting in all their ugliness. Further, lack of education among women made matter worse; the basic idea behind giving education of women was to establish on a firm footing the traditional notions of feminity.²⁷
Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahmo Samaj in 1828 at Calcutta, was the first social reformer in modern India who championed the course of women. As an advocate of equality between man and women, he openly spoke that women was not a weaker sex and in no way inferior to men morally and intellectually. He protested against evils like early marriage, polygamy, *kulinism* and supported female education, widow and inter caste marriage. He, infact, wanted that women should enjoy the rights of her tance and property. It was all due to his serious efforts that Lord William Bentick declared the practice of *Sati* as illegal and punishable offence in November 1829. Further, the leaders of Brahmo Samaj were also instrumental in enactment of Brahmo Marriage act, 1872, which aimed at abolition of child marriage. Moreover, this first social organisation established schools for the education of girls and also raised the voice in favour of widow marriage and against polygamy and *purdah*.

The next prominent reformer was Swami Dayanand who established Arya Samaj with an aim of restoration of vedic socio-religious order. On its main objective Lala Lajpat Rai's (a prominent freedom fighter and a turuely Arya Samagist of northern India) statement may be quoted who favoured for giving equal opportunities to all persons, men and women to acquire knowledge and to qualify themselves for what ever position in life they would to fill. It admits right of every person to choose his or her enviornment, fight it out, and rise as high in the scale of
humanity as he or she would. While opening schools for both girls and boys it started a crusade against mass illiteracy. As co-education did not find favour with its ideology, Gurukuls were separately opened for girls.

Besides, the Arya Samaj advocated for banning the against child marriage and expensive ceremonies as well as pomp and show at marriage time. It also did not approve widow remarriage. However, the Arya Samajists favoured the opening of widow-homes where they could take vocational training. While condemning purdah the Samaj made provisions that the women could be on any administrative or general body of this organisation. Thus, by reprehending all the social evils and making the educational environment available, the Arya Samaj paved a way for women to play an important role in the social and political life of the country.

The teachings of Rama Krishna Paramahansa popularised by his ardent and brilliant disciple Swami Vivekanand who influenced the people immensely both in India and abroad. Swami Vivekanand founded a number of Vedantic societies in India and America. Ram Krishan Mission opened a number of hospitals including a few maternity centres. Schools were also opened for both boys and girls. Swami Vivekanand had asked his disciple Nivedita for education of girls and to improve their conditions. The women became consciousness of their importance through the centres opened all over India but were also politically conscious. As a consequent, the
women got enlightened and started to infuse their sons and daughters with among the spirit of dedication, suffering and sacrifice.

Prarthana Samaj was founded by Mahadeva Govind Ranade in Poona region with an aim of the emancipation of women. He inculcated the logical ideas among women as a mission so that the traditional and orthodox Hindu customs could be weeded out that kept them lagging behind for a long period. He started his reformatory programme through his young wife whom he taught to serve her people and country.

Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar (1820-1891) is also prominently known for his ardent efforts for social advancement in the history of modern India. The reforms dealing with widow remarriage and the education of girls were successfully carried out by him. He was also largely responsible for helping the government to find the first girl's school in Calcutta in 1849. It was due to his efforts that forty girls schools came into existence in Bengal between 1855-1858. Besides, the enactment of the Government Act-I of 1856 legalizing the remarriage of Hindu widows was also made by his non-tiring and continuous hard work.

Owing to the thriving institutions, the development occurred in educational field resulting in the emergence of educated middle class during the second half of 19th century. The emergence of educated middle class and its engagements with social reform activities led to the
development of the feelings of nationalism on the one hand and anti-British sentiments on the other. It did not develop all of a sudden but grew through an interaction cum learning process, which was carried on by both the individuals of Indian elite class who happened to visit European countries and by various organisations in the last decades of 19th century.

As for the inception of women's organisation in Bengal is concerned, the lead was taken by Swarn Kumari Devi, sister of Ravinder Nath Tagore the first lady who formed the *Sakhi Samiti* in 1882 at Calcutta. Subsequently, it became a craft centre for widows. Pandit Ramabai Saraswati founded *Sharda Sadan* at Poona in 1892 to provide education and employment for women. Later on the activities of this organisation were extended to provide relief to the orphans, the destitutes and victims of the famines. The girls began to expand learning to appreciate the cult of service and sacrifice which Ramabai inculcated. *Seva Sadan* was another organisation which was founded by Ramabai Ranade in 1909 at Poona. This organisation aimed at imparting education to the women and training them in industry, teaching, nursing and midwifery. It also established a hostel. In 1917, it became an independent registered organisation.

*Shri Zorostrian Mandal* was started in 1903 at Bombay with an aim to help the women in general and the parsi women in particular. It laid emphasis on women to become economically independent. Similarly, *Gujrati Hindu Stree*
Mandal which was formed by Shri B.N. Motiwala in 1908 at Bombay worked with an object to promote contact among gujrati women in order to provide them appropriate education and to raise their status in different fields. Besides, it organised classes in sewing, embroidery, painting, leather work and imparting training to teachers. It also developed library for women and children. Sarojini Nalini organised Mahila Samitis in many districts, towns and villages of Bengal with a view to impart education to women. This organisation worked against purdah, early marriage and encouraged widow remarriage. They also enlightened the common masses on the aspects of health and sanitation and raised a voice for equal rights of women in franchise and education.

In Baroda, Chiman Bai Maternity and Child welfare League was established in 1914 for the sake of health of women. Bhagini Samaj was founded at Poona in 1916 to serve the society in general and women and children in particular. It emphasised on the programmes like education, social service, propaganda and legal works. Several branches of Mahila Seva Samaj were also established in Mysore and Pune in the years 1913 and 1916 respectively. An all India organisation formed in 1917 was the Women's Indian Association (WIA). It was the first organisation whose aim was to be an all India in scope, to include members all types of women who were residents of India to band them together for mutual service and the good of the country. Annie Besant, Margaret Cousin and Dorothy Jinarajadasa were the founding
members of this organisation. By 1923-24, the Association had 51 branches and 2500 membership in India. They gradually continued to increase. Another prominent women organisation, *The National Council of Women in India (NCWI)*, was formed in 1925 when it was accepted as national "branch" of the International Council of women. Developing as a prime women organisation, it raised various issues on national and international platforms. Another major women's organisation to have been established in post World War I was the *All India Women's Conference (AIWC)*. Established in 1927, it worked significantly to elevate the status of women and bring about a change in their legal and constitutional rights. The works of all such prominent organisations have been thoroughly examined in regard to their contribution to the freedom struggle in the forthcoming chapter.

A number of women's journals mainly in Hindi came out in the early years of the 20th century which went a long way in giving a voice to the issues concerning to women. These issues included female education, child marriage, mismatched, marriages polygamy, *purdah*, female backwardness, etc. *Stree Darpan* was such a pioneer spokesman of women cause and credit goes to Rameshwari Nehru, who had started this journal in 1909. Another important magazine introduced in 1909 was *Grihalakshmi*. It mainly focussed on the traditional role of women and their education. Significantly, it generally echoed the view of *Stree Darpan*.50
Saraswati and Madhuri were also two women's journal which was added by male journalists. And another women oriented journal was Mahila Sarvasu which was published by Devdutt Sharma. Another women's magazine at that time Chand which was first published from Allahabad in 1922. Its editors were Ramrikh Sehgal and Ramkrishan Mukund Laghate while Vidyavati Sehgal was its manager. The concerned material of therein journals and many more have been quoted in the forthcoming chapters in assessing the progress of the national movement.

Women in Pre-Gandhian Movement

From the inception of Indian National congress, its membership was open to women. Allan Octavian Hume even went ahead asking all shades of opinion never to forget that unless the elevation of the female element of the nation proceeded paripassu (with an equal place) with their work, all their labour for the political enfranchisement of the country would prove vain. For the first time, ten women who attended the fourth session of the Congress at Bombay in 1889 were also from Bombay and Calcutta. Among them, the prominent women were Swarna Kumari Devi, sister of Rabinder Nath Tagore, and Pandita Ramabai, an Arya Samajist of Poona. The former being an enlightened woman had already started Sakhi Samiti in 1886 to foster among Indian women an active and enlightened interest in the welfare of the country where as the latter one had the honour of being the first women to speak from the congress platform where she also
proposed a vote of thanks to the President, Pherozeshah Mahta.54

Sarla Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Swarna Kumari, who was to take an active part in the nationalist movement in the years to compose a song urging the people to different provinces of the country to join the freedom struggle. Interestingly the same song was sung in chorus at the Congress session in 1901 by a group of over fifty girls trained by herself55. Similarly, the proceedings of the 1902 session of the Congress at Ahmedabad commenced with the singing of the National Anthem by Lady Vidyagauri Nilkanth and her sister Sharda Mehta56.

The decision for the partition of Bengal was announced by the government on 20 July, 1905 first time galvanised the common people including women into political action. It was important to note that about 500 women held a meeting at Jani Khandi village, district of Mursidabad, to protest against the partition. In September 1905 when Rabinder Nath Tagore announced his plan for observing Rakhi Bandhan on the "partition day" i.e. 16 October, women took part in sufficient number. Similarly, women also observed "non-cooking day" as suggested by Romendra Sunder Trivedi who asked them to be part of political movement without overthey neglecting or leaving household57. Thereafter, the notion of boycotting of British goods in general and foreign cloths made in Manchester and other British centres in particular as propounded by a revolutionary Shyamji Krishna Verma who also published
the same idea in his own Journal *Indian Sociologist* in October 1905. Not only this, he even laid emphasis that economic boycott as a forged weapon of a weak and unarmed nation against a powerful armed alien government, the natives would commit no evils. The movement, in the way, started with boycott of foreign and was soon widened to with boycott of person using British goods. As a consequent, *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and National Education became the slogans of the nationalists.

Once the popularisation of *Swadeshi* movement got momentum, the women in Congress also did not lag behind in realising their responsibility. In Bengal, Sarla Devi, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore, opened an emporium called *Lakshmi Bhandar* in Calcutta with the contribution of her own golden bangles and other jewellery in order to popularise the Swadeshi goods. The women active in the same movement outside Bengal were Mrs. Ketkar (daughter of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mrs. A.V. Joshi in Bombay, Smt. Sushila Devi and Purani in Punjab. Similarly, Smt. Sarojini Bose (wife of Tara Prasanna Bose) pledged not to put gold bangles and Mrs. J.K. Ganguli gave her bracelet as a contribution towards paying off the seditious activities.

Sister Nivedita who was also a great source of inspiration to many young men and women visited the court in 1907 to stand surety for release at Bhupendra Nath Dutt, youngest brother of Swami Vivekanand, who was arrested for sedition as editor of *Yugantar*. He was,
subsequently, convicted to one year rigorous imprisonment. Another eminent lady was Miss Kumudini Mitter (daughter of Kristo Mitter, a renowned nationalist) also organised a group of educated Brahmin ladies in order to make a liaison between the different revolutionaries who were watched by the police, their organisation also helped in the circulation of revolutionary leaflets and literature. It also propagated and preached the cause of the revolutionaries through Suprabhat, a Bengali magazine.

The Punjabi women did not lag behind in making their contribution during the national movement. Smt. Sushila Devi of Sialkot was the first lady who delivered a series of lectures in which she attacked the governmental policies. Smt. Purani, a prominent Arya Samajist of Hissar, toured various districts of Punjab for the advocacy of the cause of Swadeshi. Another woman Har Devi (wife of Roshan Lal, Barrister of Lahore) was a social worker and editor of a Hindi magazine. The Bharat Bhagini also joined the rank of the political workers. She not only took the responsibility of arranging meetings for revolutionaries but also of fund collection for their multiple activities. The involvement of women in Swadeshi movement was also testified by Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald who visited India at that time.

Owing to anti-partition movement of Bengal within and outside of the province as well as the emerging popularity of Swadeshi and boycotting of foreign goods, despite the dominance of moderates in Congress, the British Government was forced to retreat.
emerging trend of revolutionary activities and the entry of some daring leaders in Congress like B.G. Tilak and Lajpat Rai also played a decisive role in the same context. As a consequent, on the recommendations of Lord Harding who replaced Minto as Viceroy towards the close of 1910, the annulment of partition was announced for the sake of restoration of peace. It was made on the occasion of the visit of the British King and Queen, George V and Mary for Delhi Darbar held in December 1911.

The women entered into agitational politics only after the First World War. This was made possible only by a new women's organisations and the recruitment of women to existing political organisation. The entry of Mrs. Annie Besant to Indian politics in 1914, her elevation to Presidentship of Congress and Women's India Association exelerated the process of bringing women into national politics. Her activities were seen as threat to the government and she was asked to leave the country. On her refusal, she was interned. However, it was due to widespread protests that got her released by August 1917. Similarly Sarojini Naidu's role at that juncture, whereat women's participation in political activities was at molecular number, was remarkable in the same context. While justifying women's uplift both of dynamic and bold ladies appealed to ancient Indian ideals wherein Besant characterized ancient Indian women as "Cast in a heroic mold". They side by side, aimed at improvement in the status of women. For them, the decline of Indian civilization was linked up with the decline in the status of
women. Naidu explained, "When women lost their self reverence, degeneration set it, the improvement in the status of women was necessary for India to achieve greatness once more. Sarojini Naidu, being the first Indian woman to make politics her full time occupation, was infact, drawn into the vortex of politics by Gopal Krishan Gokhle whom she considered her Guru. It was on his pursuasion that she had joined congress. In December 1951 she attended congress session at Bombay as a United Provinces delegate whereat she supported a resolution of self government. Further, as a member of Home Rule League she led a deputation of women to England consisting of Annie Besant, Mrs. Herabai Ardesher Tata and Miss Mthan Ardeshir Tata, Edwin Montagu as members. They presented a memorandum to the British Govt. asking for voting rights for women.

Women in Non-Cooperation Movement

Gandhi's arrival in India was a turning point in India's struggle for freedom. After a conditional support given to Muslims in Khilafat movement, he brought them to Congress, as an instrumental, for Hindu-Muslim unity. The Satyagrah movement for first time was launched by him on 6th April 1919. The passing of the repressive Rowlatt Bills by the British Government which aimed at prohibiting public protest and suspending civil liberties were, infact, responsible for the launching of Non-Cooperation Movement. The movement was based on six points namely: (i) boycott of law court by lawyers and to set up popular
tribunals for administering justice; (ii) boycott of school and college owned or aided by the government, and the establishment, of national educational institutions; (iii) boycott of elections; (iv) surender of honours and titles (v) Boycott of British goods and encouragement of Swadeshi; and (vi) a temperance campaign to wean addicts from liquor75.

In the beginning, the first civil disobedience movement was non-violent but slowly it became violent. As it was faster in Punjab, it attracted the government to proclaim Martial Law in the province76. As a result, the event of Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar took place. Some four hundred people shot dead and twelve hundred were injured (including women and children), over and above this, the people were humiliated in various ways as reported by Hunter Enquiry Committee77. In retaliation, there was an outbreak of violence in different parts of the country in the form of arson, looting and even assaults on Englishmen at the physical level. Gandhi was left greatly pained at these incidents, and on 18 April 1919, postponed his Satyagraha campaign. He candidly admitted that his decision to launch the Satyagraha campaign was a "Himalya miscalculation" because the masses were not prepared for this.

A special session of the Indian National Congress was held at Calcutta on 4 September 1920 where a resolution for non-violent Non-cooperation was adopted. It was confirmed at the regular annual session of the Congress at
Nagpur in December of the same year\textsuperscript{78}. As Gandhi was well aware of women as passive resisters in both of earlier agitations in south Africa as well as in textile mill-workers' strike at Ahmedabad. He invited the women to join Non-Cooperation Movement. Addressing public meetings in different parts of the country, he also appealed to women to donate their jewellery for the collection of Tilak Swaraj Fund. In his speeches he compared the British rule to \textit{Ravana-rajya} and said that as \textit{Sita} did not cooperate with \textit{Ravana}, so the Indian people must not cooperate with the \textit{Rakshasi-Sarkar}\textsuperscript{79}.

**BENGAL**

The women in Bengal joined the Non-Cooperation Movement through the constructive programme. A number of girls of Diocesan College gave up their studies and joined the movement on hearing the speech of Gandhi in Calcutta in 1920 as recalled by Renuka Ray. Some of them donated their bangles and jewellery to Gandhi as he demanded them for the national cause. Thereafter, they took to \textit{spinning}, used and sold \textit{Khaddar}. Not only this but they also organised \textit{Mahila Karma Samaj} of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee to carry out propaganda and constructive work amongst the women of Bengal\textsuperscript{80}.

The prominent women including Smt. Inder Prabha Majumdar and Smt. Radu Bibi organised and addressed the meetings in the same context\textsuperscript{81}. Similarly, Smt. Basanti (Mrs. C.R. Dass) Smt. Urmila Devi and Smt. Suniti Devi, organiser of \textit{Nari Karma Mandir} (women's worker's abode)
were the first ladies to offer civil resistance to the government. As a result, they were arrested on the charge of 'obstructing the gentlemen of Calcutta' by compelling or influencing them to buy Khadi. The others who were arrested with them were Smt. Anukul Mitter, Smt. Surya Shome, Smt. Umashi Devi, Smt. Satya Devi and also eight Sikh ladies. They were, however, released in the evening.

BOMBAY

In the metropolitan city of Bombay, women joined the Non-Cooperation campaign. They strengthened the movement through meetings wherein emphasis was laid on the importance of spinning, organisation of Khadi melas and holding of demonstrations, etc. were popularised. Among the various women who played a significant role in Bombay were Avantika Bai Gokhale, Sarojini Naidu etc. The former remained active during the period 1920-46 and were imprisoned many times. She started Hindu Mahila Sangh inorder to bring about nationalist awareness among women.

Sarojini Naidu played an important role by addressing a number of meetings during the Satyagraha week (6–13 April 1921) with the object of associating women in large number with the constructive programme of Swadeshi. On the last day of the week, about 500 women were present to hear the speech of Sarojini Naidu. Other prominent women who made efforts to popularize the constructive programme in Bombay were Prin and Goshibhen Captain,
the Petit women, Jaiji Jehangir and Mithubhen, the Faizi sister, women from Tyabji family, Manekbai Bahadurji, etc. These eminent women were closely associated with some of the established women's organisations of Bombay like Bhagini Samaj, the Gujarati Hindu Stree Mandal and Hind Mahila Samaj. Some other women's organisations which came into being in 1921 in Bombay were Shri Sarada Samaj of Dadar, the Ladies Khilafat Committee and Rashtriya Stree Sabha which played an most important role because of their association with the Congress.86

PUNJAB

It was Punjab (the land of five rivers) wherein Gandhi had called British rule as Satamic government (devil's rule) in his speeches during his visit. Owing to his chrismatic personality not only men but women in abundant number also joined Non-Cooperation Movement. The first woman's meeting was held on the 6th and 7th December, 1922 which was presided over by Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi. Mrs. Radha Devi (wife of Lajpat Rai) was the chairperson of the Reception Committee. In her address, she declared that the object of the conference was to strike a net of warning to the idlers who were sitting with folded hands when the leaders were under going imprisonment. She exhorted women to support the Swaraj with zeal and courage which were the characteristics of the Punjab Women87. Parvati Devi, an ardent worker of the Congress, was arrested at Meerut for the socalled inflaming speeches. She was taken to Agra Jail in Jail clothes. As a mark of respect, the ladies
took out procession on 16 December 1922. She was convicted and was sentenced two years imprisonment.

Sarla Devi Chaudhrani, settled in Lahore after her marriage, was so strongly influenced by Gandhian ideology during 1919-22 that she left the revolutionary path and became an ardent and dedicated worker of Gandhian programme. She donated most of her jewellery for the nationalist cause and even returned the Padmavati Gold Medal conferred upon her by Calcutta University. She made an extensive tour in various parts of northern India inorder to popularise the concepts of *Charkha and Khadi*.\(^{88}\) All the above discussed Ladies went a long way in binding the Punjabi women together at the emotional level. This may be testified from the fact that when Gandhi visited Jallandher in early 1921, the welcome address presented to him was printed on a piece of *Khadi* supplied by the aged mother of a prominent lawyer of the city, Nazimuddin Shah\(^ {89}\).

It is significant to note that the popularization of *Swadeshi* concept did not remain confined to big cities only. Infact, its influence was felt in smaller towns also. At Karnal, an exhibition of *khadi* was organised and prizes were awarded to the *khadi* manufacturers. Moreover, about 3000 women wearing *khadi* dresses walked through the streets of Multan along with a cart full of khadi which they sold during the course of their unique march\(^ {90}\). Expressing great satisfaction over the success of Non-cooperation campaign among women in Punjab Gandhi spoke praising

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\(^{88}\) [Source: Original text]

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them that the 'punjabi women have understood my message.\textsuperscript{91}

**GUJRAT**

The Non- Cooperation Movement became immensely popular among women of Gujrat also. The women associated with Gandhi’s Ashram, infact, contributed a great deal in making it popular in several towns, cities and villages of Gujrat.\textsuperscript{92} Among the Ashram women, Anasuyabhen Sarabhai (sister of Ambalal Sarabhi, a leading mill owner of Ahmedabad) who has been active in social service since 1914, played an important role in popularisation of constructive programme. Alongwith Kasturba, Anasuyabhen and some other "Ashramite sisters" impressed upon the women the significance of spinning *charkha*, wearing of *Khadi*, boycott of government educational institutions, removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. Further, under Gandhi’s inspiration, several girls students left government schools and colleges. Prominent among them were Manibhen patel and Miss Desai whose efforts were hailed by Gandhi in public.\textsuperscript{93}

In many of the women's meetings, women showed their generosity by donating jewellery and cash for the noble cause. Gandhi was so moved by such generous acts that after a meeting at Ahmedabad, he made the following statement," This amount is more sacred than donations worth lakhs of rupees from millionaires. There is an aroma
of the very soul of the women of Ahmedabad in every brass piece given here. Every coin is steeped with their devotion for the country. It is on the bases of such sacred coins that I will erect the edifice of Swaraj.  

ANDHRA PRADESH

Gandhi's visit to Vijaywada (Andhra Pradesh) in 1921 in regard to all India Congress meeting was decisive. The speeches, in fact, made by him on the occasion proved to be a big source of inspiration for women to participate in Non-Cooperation Movement. Subbamma being influenced by his magnetic personality became the first woman of the region to participate and was sent behind the bars. She also succeeded in motivating other women of the region to participate in the freedom struggle. Her efforts were hailed by the local newspaper Sudarsini which gave the following report: "We congratulate Smt. Subbamma for her patriotism and courage to go to jail. We (the women) have greater tenacity of purpose than men. We hope that Andhra women will adopt Swadeshi at least now that they have heard of the heroism and conviction of Subbamma."

Durga bai was another woman of Godawari district who started her political career at the tender age of eleven also joined the movement because of Gandhi's influence. Gandhi held a meeting at Rajahmundry on 6 April 1921 which was attended by her also as she happened to be present in that city in connection with the wedding of her close relative. While climbing at the dais, she not only
offered her collection to Gandhi but she also readily parted with her golden bracelets too as demanded by Gandhi on the same occasion. However, in 1922, Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement, all of a sudden taking all concerned by surprise. But despite the suspension of the movement, the atmosphere in this area remained charged and women continued to conduct meetings to popularise khadi and the concept of the abolition of the untouchability, the two most important items of Gandhi's constructive programme.

ORRISSA

The Swarajya movement in Orrissa took a start after the first meeting of Gandhi to Cuttack on 23 March 1921 wherein he addressed a big public meeting on Kathuri river bed at the town. In the afternoon on the same day, he addressed a separate small gathering of about 40 women in Binod Behari building premises. Haimavati Devi made all the arrangements for that meeting and Mohini Mohan Senapati's wife sang a patriotic song on the occasion. Thus from the very beginning Gandhi's Congress activities had an important impact on the women in Orissa. In the early phase of Non-Coopration movement, the provincial leaders laid stress on the establishment of national schools, enrolment of Congressmen and collection of subscription for Tilak Swaraj Fund.

As a consequence, the Satyavadi School of Gopabandhu Das (a prominent Orriyan Congress leader) and the Chakradharpur High School were converted to national
school. Besides, national school's were also established at Sambhalpur, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Balasore and Soro\textsuperscript{101}. Not only this but a type of National University known as \textit{Utkal Swarjya Shiksha Parishad} was also established at Cuttack\textsuperscript{102}

Some centres were also established to train workers and volunteers for the movement. For example, "Swaraj Ashram "at Cuttack (headquater)," Alkashram" at Jagatsinghpur under Gopalandhu Choudhary and "Swaraj Mandir" at Balasore under the guidance of H.K. Mahtab, etc. were formed. Gradually, the Congress ideals and the message of Non-Cooperation spread like wild fire in different parts of Orissa. A newspaper \textit{Samaj} also played a significant role in taking the movement to the remote corners of far-off village\textsuperscript{103}

Rama Devi being inspired by his uncle Madhusudan Das's ideas and speeches took a lead in popularising the \textit{Charkha} work. She took the message of Swaraj and \textit{Khaddar} programm to other women and prepared them for the national cause. Another prominent lady was Kuntala Kumari Sabat who proved herself the true follower of Gandhi. When many people began hiding spinning wheels on the threat of a circular issued by government on boycotting foreign clothes she rose to the occasion. Kuntala Kumari challenged the authority in these words, "Nation is our strength, \textit{charkha} is our life. We will hold \textit{charkha} in our hand and we will destroy all the conspiracy of the enemy". With these words, she started creating a
new awareness among women through her strong pen and appeal to the womenhood not to use the foreign goods and to destroy the administrative machinery of the British authority. In 1922, Rama Devi along with Padmavati Devi and Hiramani Devi attended the annual session of Indian National Congress held at Gaya. Arousal of this political awareness among women in this way, during the Non-Cooperation Movement continued and became more manifest during the course of freedom movement.

Muslim women in the Non-Cooperation Movement

Among Muslim ladies, the name of Abida Bano Begum, popularly known as Bai Aman, mother of Ali Brother (Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali) stands foremost. While making an extensive tour, she preached the message of khadi and Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilafat movement and Non-Cooperation Movement. In a meeting at Shimla in September 1922, she made a special appeal to the women to take up Khaddar. She was keen to visit the Frontier Province but orders were issued whereby she was kept away from that region. In another meeting in Punjabi, she confidently spoke in favour of Swaraj. She said that some people left houses of ornaments to their children after their death but she was of the opinion that there was nothing as good as freedom and asked women to leave Swaraj after their death for the children. She even challenged that Swaraj could not be achieved by asking but was sure to come if people had courage and women a heart to make sacrifices for the cause.
Bai Amman addressed another women's conference at Bombay when six thousand people attended. At another meeting at Ahmedabad she appealed to the people to unite for" without co-operation among the different communities, we can't liberate our country or live peaceful and honourable lives."109 She also worked in Khilafat movement wherein she asked Muslim women to give up purdah and join the movement.110 Mrs. Abdul Qadir was another Muslim lady who played an active part in the movement at Lucknow.

Inspite of all the above discussed cases dealing with women's contribution to the Non-Cooperation Movement, their participation was not at a mass scale. It was mainly confined to those, whose husbands, brother's and sons had already joined the struggle and were in jail. However, it cannot be denied that Indian women made a contribution to the first phase of Gandhian movement i.e. Non-Cooperation campaign as it was first movement organised under the official leadership of the Congress and Gandhi. Both these words 'Congress and Gandhi' became synonymous in the consequent period.
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