



## The Contribution of Women Freedom Fighters in the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Bundelkhand Sub Region

*Asma Khan<sup>a</sup> and Prof. Anubha Shrivastava<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar (History), Bundelkhand University, Jhansi

<sup>b</sup>Principal, V.M.L. Government Girls' Degree College, Jhansi

### ABSTRACT :

The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a pivotal phase in India's independence struggle. This paper explores the underrecognized role of women in the Bundelkhand sub-region, highlighting their bravery and strategic participation. Drawing on archival records, oral histories, and regional literature, the study reveals how women transcended traditional gender roles to lead protests, organize salt marches, boycott foreign goods, and endure police brutality. Many women freedom fighters have participated with great enthusiasm in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The study also examines how caste, class, and rural dynamics influenced women's participation in civil disobedience, emphasizing their role in public mobilization and underground resistance. This study contributes to a more inclusive historiography of the Indian freedom movement

**Keywords:** Freedom, women, struggle Civil Disobedience Movement,

### 1.1 Introduction

India has a rich history of women's significant contributions to the nation's cultural and political environment. Women have often made sacrifices for their families, fighting for autonomy and making sacrifices for their families. The Civil Disobedience Movement in India exemplified the extensive involvement of women in politics, with women from traditional households, professional, commercial, or agricultural backgrounds actively protesting outside stores, confronting batons, and risking imprisonment. Many officers saw Indian women as simultaneously striving for household and national freedom [1]. However, their positions remained largely unaffected by their unexpected involvement in politics. Gandhian nonviolence enhanced the masculine role, imbued with feminine qualities through the promotion of self-sacrifice and the acceptance of pain. The war for independence's historical context would be incomplete without recognizing the substantial contributions made by women. The ladies of India's sacrifice will have a crucial impact. They show resolute commitment and courage in their endeavor to protect our liberty, triumphing against many obstacles, repression, and misfortune. The list of distinguished women, celebrated for their steadfast dedication and unswerving allegiance to India's cause, is extensive. Indian women played a significant role in India's freedom struggle, starting in 1817 with Bhima Bai Holkar using guerilla warfare strategies. In the 19th century, women like Rani Chennamma and Begum Hazrat Mahal resisted the British East India Company, inspiring others like Rani Jindan Kaur, Baiza Bai, Chauhan Rani, and Tapasvini Maharani. Women from diverse backgrounds, including educated, progressive households and rural communities, participated in India's freedom struggle. They came from different castes, religions, and social classes, reflecting the movement's inclusive nature [2]. Prominent figures who made significant contributions in both the political and military spheres throughout the 20th century were Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, and Annie Besant. The first and most extensive rebellion against British East India Company control in India took place in 1857–1858 and was referred to as the Indian Rebellion or the First War of Independence. The Civil Disobedience Movement played a crucial role in the Indian independence struggle, promoting national unity and awareness among the people. Women played a crucial role in driving social transformation in Bundelkhand, opposing child marriage, dowry, and other forms of societal inequities. They founded schools and other educational institutions with the goal of providing access to education for women and promoting knowledge of religious and social autonomy [3].

### 1.2 Role of women in Indian Freedom struggle

The Indian National Congress and the Swadeshi movement in 1905 and 1914 marked significant milestones in women's participation in the freedom struggle. M.K. Gandhi emphasized the importance of equal participation for both men and women, urging them to be mentally, physically, and spiritually strong [4]. This led to women from liberal and conservative households, urban and rural, banding together for independence. Women participated equally in the Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience campaigns. Gandhi's ideas about women's roles in independence inspired their places in the struggle. Women took part in the non-cooperation, salt Satyagraha, and civil disobedience movements alongside renowned people like as Sarojini Naidu, Mridula Sarabai, and Kamaladevi Chattapadhyaya. During the 1942 silent India movement, women from all over India took part in processions, meetings, protests, and strike organization. Some women embraced revolutionary activities, like as Preeti Wadkar and Kalpana Joshi, connected with the Chittagong armoury raids [5]. In order to train and recruit people for upcoming uprisings, the Chachati Sangha was founded in 1928. Women participated in the independence

movement in both moderate and radical capacities. With 42 elected in the 1937 election and 16 in the 1922 AICC meeting, Bombay's women were politically active and represented the city in both the constituent legislature and the AICC meeting.

### 1.3 Civil Disobedience Movement in Bundelkhand

The Civil Disobedience Movement in India was founded in 1930, with women playing a crucial role in questioning traditional gender roles and breaking social limitations. Indian women played a significant role in many nonviolent movements aimed at achieving India's independence. The movement began with a session of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee under Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1928, which included the late Krishna Dutt. In 1929, Mahatma Gandhi visited Chirgaon, leading to the Salt Satyagraha in Jhansi. Notable participants included Shri Atmaram and Govind Kher. The Salt Satyagraha was a collective effort to violate salt legislation in Aupara, but the police forcibly intercepted a large number of rural peasants [6]. In 1928, Gandhi returned to politics and initiated a civil disobedience movement, which resulted in some women actively participating in public affairs. Women's involvement in the civil disobedience movement of 1930-32 varied greatly in quality and quantity from that of the early 1920s, therefore demonstrating their historical significance. The British Government had already rejected the Nehru Report of 1928, and the ongoing persecution continued without interruption. In 1928, John Simon and his associates arrived in India, which was a crucial point in the nationwide movement [7]. The British Government established the Simon Commission, an inquiry commission consisting solely of white individuals, to scrutinize the implementation of 1919 reform laws. The Congress passed a resolution to fully boycott the Simon Commission due to India's non-participation. Women were heavily involved in the boycott demonstrations, with Hansa Mehta playing a significant role in the protest in Bombay's metropolitan hub. The British Government used excessive force, resorting to lathi charges to quell the enraged crowds. However, Lala Lajpat Rai, who suffered extensive physical injuries, died on November 17, 1928. On January 26, 1930, a march started from Gola Kuan carrying the tricolor flag. The police intervened and dispersed the crowd, but they did not make any arrests. The women of the Jhansi area played an active role in the Civil Disobedience Movement, with pioneering women such as Mrs. Pista Goyal, Savitri Bhagwat, Kanti Devi Pangoria, Halki Bai, Kunj Bihari Lal, and Shivanin actively participating in activities such as boycotting foreign goods and picketing.

### 1.4 Women leaders of freedom struggles (Civil Disobedience Movement)

The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934), led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a pivotal phase in India's nationalist struggle, challenging British authority through non-violent means. Women played a pivotal role in the campaign, breaking social conventions and participating in picketing, protests, salt-making, and underground activities, often at great personal risk [8]. These women were not just supporters but active agents of political change.

**Aruna Araf Ali:** Aruna Asaf Ali was a prominent freedom fighter during the Civil Disobedience Movement in the 1930s. She participated in Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha in Delhi in 1931, a call to peacefully disobey British laws. Despite initial reluctance from the British, she was arrested and sent to jail. After her release, she refused to leave jail to protest against the mistreatment of fellow female political prisoners and demanded equal treatment. This act of civil resistance gained her widespread respect among Indian nationalists. Aruna's courage at a young age helped mobilize more women into active roles in the freedom struggle and marked the beginning of her deep political engagement, particularly during the Quit India Movement.

**Jyotirmoy Ganguly:** Jyotirmayee Gangopadhyay was a prominent Bengali educationist, feminist, and freedom fighter who played a significant role in the fight for Indian independence, particularly during the 1930s Civil Disobedience Movement. She was raised in a forward-thinking Brahmo Samaj family in Kolkata. Jyotirmayee pursued higher education, earning a Master's degree in Philosophy from the University of Calcutta in 1908. She taught at various educational institutions and served as principal in Sri Lanka. In the early 1920s, Jyotirmayee became involved in the Indian National Congress and the Non-Cooperation Movement, mobilizing women for the freedom struggle and initiating the Students' Association for Social Service in 1926. She led protests against British colonial policies as vice-president of the Women's Satyagraha Committee. Her activism led to her imprisonment in 1930 and again in 1932.

**Rajkumari Amrit Kaur:** Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, born on February 2, 1889, in Kapurthala, Punjab, was an early Indian woman educated at Oxford University. Influenced by Gandhian philosophy, she gave up her aristocratic life to join the freedom struggle. She participated in Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha campaign in the early 1930s, challenging the British salt monopoly. Despite being arrested and jailed, she used her global connections to raise awareness about India's demand for self-rule and the mistreatment of political prisoners. Kaur worked to mobilize Indian women into the freedom movement and initiated lifelong campaigns for women's rights, education, and public health, which continued even after independence.

**Sarojini Naidu:** Sarojini Naidu, known as the Nightingale of India, was a prominent Indian freedom struggle leader who combined intellectual brilliance with fearless activism. She led the Dharasana Salt Satyagraha in Gujarat, a non-violent protest against British salt works, earning her national and international admiration. Naidu also played a key role in mobilizing women across India, encouraging them to step beyond domestic roles and participate in protests, picketing, and court arrests [9]. As the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress in 1925, Naidu's political legitimacy was established before the Civil Disobedience Movement. Throughout the movement, Naidu was imprisoned multiple times, demonstrating unflinching dedication to non-violent resistance. Her legacy continues as a testament to how articulate, fearless, and visionary women leaders shaped India's independence.

**Mrs. Halkibai Shri Ram Nath's wife, Mrs. Halkibai,** was involved in Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign with Mrs. Pista Goyal. However, the government threatened her job and apologized for the lack of prosperity in her home. This led to a sense of liberation in the couple. Halkibai played an active role in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, alongside Mrs. Pistadevi. The authorities apprehended her and sentenced her to a 6-month jail term under the Civil Disobedience Act in 1932. Despite facing severe mistreatment, Halkibai remained resilient and received a Rs 150 punishment. The couple's experiences sparked a sense of liberation and a sense of freedom in the country.

**Kantidevi Pangoriya Krishna Chandra Pangoria,** a renowned Satyagrahi from the Jhansi area, married Kranti Devi and was involved in various agitations, inspiring her to join the independence struggle. In 1930, she participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi, leading to a prison term from the British authorities. In 1942, she participated in the individual Satyagraha. Mrs. Pangoria passed away in 1950. She was married to

Shri Krishna Gopal Sharma, a renowned patriot who also participated in the struggle for independence. Mrs. Savitri Devi inherited her inclination towards priesthood from her husband and embraced a saintly role during a time of fervent independence. During the Satyagraha movement, Shri Krishna Gopal Sharma participated in the salt movement, leading to a violation of salt prohibition in Chaupara, Jhansi. Mrs. Savitri Devi adopted the practice of abstaining from foreign purchases and consistently wore khadi fabric. This period, women from Jhansi actively participated in the civil disobedience campaign, including a protest against pharmacy stores. Her involvement led to her arrest and a three-month jail term. Mrs. Savitri Devi played a significant role in achieving freedom, as males often exhibited inappropriate behavior towards women during this period.

Mrs. Anusuiya Mrs. Anusuiya, born in 1980 in Baberu, Banda district, was involved in the non-cooperation campaign initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. She received a 6-month jail term for her involvement. Throughout her life, she dedicated herself to national duty. Mrs. Godin Sharma, residing in Karvi, played a significant role in the Freedom Movement. She participated in the Salt Satyagraha protest, organizing a protest against imported clothing stores and a ban on alcohol. She was apprehended and imposed a Rs 100 fine. In 1932, she participated in the Satyagraha movement, leading to a conviction and a 6 months imprisonment. She repeated the protest in 1942 and received a 15-month jail term.

Smt. Kamala Devi Mrs. Kamala Devi Gupta resided in Jabalpur's Katni region. Her birth year was 1916. She was married to Mr. Chhadami Lal, a native of Savarkar Ward in Katni. Chhadami Lal Ji actively participated in the Jungle Satyagraha, which began in Katni in 1930. He violated forest regulations by igniting a gas lantern at night, which resulted in the police confiscating his axe. Under the influence of Shri Chadami Lal, Mrs. Kamala Devi also actively engaged in the struggle for independence. During her involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement, she and her husband were apprehended in the Lagan Bandhi Movement and subsequently received a combined jail term of 6 months, spanning from April 15, 1932, to December 11, 1932.

Smt. Ketki Bai Mrs. Ketki Bai resided in Richhai, a tiny hamlet located in Jabalpur. She actively engaged in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 and was apprehended by the authorities. She received a 9-day jail term for her involvement in the Salt Movement.

Smt. Prabhavati Namdev Mrs. Prabhavati Namdev, a prominent figure in the Indian independence movement, participated in the rent-ban campaign of 1932 in Jabalpur. She led a non-violent movement at Tilak Bhoomi Talaiya, conducting a historic assembly without resorting to violence. Despite facing accusations of mistreating women, she was detained by the police on April 2, 1932. Despite the difficulties, her zeal remained intact and continued to grow. Smt. Sundarbai, a prominent figure in the Civil Disobedience Movement, was detained by the police for participating in the Jungle Satyagraha in 1930 [10]. She was fined Rs 25 and received a prison term until 16.08.30. Mothers like Mrs. Gopibai Kanajiya Kedarin Bai, Satyawati Awasthi, Mrs. Misra, and the women freedom warriors of Silodi also fought for independence in Jabalpur. Martial law enforcement in Silodi was met with excitement, but a physical assault by police officer Thakur Chhatar Singh and retaliation from Bhurepal Pathak's maid led to her detention. Mrs. Gopibai, wife of Lal Singh Kanojia, was detained by the police for participating in the Jungle Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement in Sihora.

Mrs. Neelibai Mrs. Neelibai Mishra was the offspring of Mr. Gaurishankar Mishra. He was born in Jabalpur in the year 1918 AD. The British government detained him for his involvement in the anti-tax campaign of 1932. In 1932, he received a 6-month jail term. In 1942, with the initiation of the Quit India Movement and Mahatma Gandhi's proclamation of the Do or Die slogan, Neelibai fearlessly joined the movement and raised the flag at the District Office in Jabalpur. Consequently, the authorities charged her under Section 129 (1). During the DRI period, he received a prison term that lasted from September 1, 1943, to February 19, 1943. However, even after her release from incarceration, she persistently made valuable contributions to the campaign advocating for freedom.

## 1.5 Impact of Civil Disobedience Movement

The Civil Disobedience Movement had a huge economic effect, lowering both foreign imports and government revenue. It drew a varied crowd, including women, students, and young people, who rallied against illicit products. Muslims were restricted owing to government appeals and sectarian unrest, although certain localities experienced significant participation. Other classes, including merchants, small-scale traders, indigenous people, workers, and farmers, took part in the movement [11]. The movement's extensive involvement helped to increase its economic influence. Following the start of the Salt Satyagraha Movement, also known as the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi made a last attempt to achieve a resolution. The individual delineated his 'eleven ideas' of administrative reform and said that if Lord Irwin were to adopt them, there would be no need for agitation. There is a strong call for the British government to publicly announce their commitment to granting full independence to India. This includes promptly releasing political prisoners, eliminating the salt tax, revoking laws that limit freedom of speech, association, and assembly, lifting bans on civil disobedience, removing restrictions on peasants, repealing trade and commerce laws, abolishing the feudal land revenue system, withdrawing military and police forces, reducing military spending, and ensuring adequate representation of the Indian people in legislative councils.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The contribution of women freedom fighters in the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Bundelkhand sub-region exemplifies their bravery, perseverance, and political awareness inside a profoundly patriarchal environment. Despite existing within stringent social limitations, these women became essential contributors to the national movement, galvanizing communities, resisting colonial powers, and contesting conventional gender norms. Their participation was not only supportive but also transformative, imbuing the movement with grassroots vigor and ethical power. This regional perspective illustrates how nationalism permeated the most isolated and neglected areas of India, propelled by women whose narratives have frequently been eclipsed in conventional historiography. Women have played a crucial role in India's independence struggle, advocating for women's suffrage and making significant sacrifices for emancipation. Initially behind men in various domains, they collaborated with men in the struggle for liberation after the Vedic era. Indian women contributed to peace-loving and revolutionary movements, including the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Intellectuals believed that persuasion techniques were ineffective and used agitation to push the British Government to heed their demands. During Gandhi's salt march, many women actively participated, abstaining from foreign establishments and producing salt. Despite the expanded public role of women, women's perceptions did not change. Gandhiji advocated for women to fulfill traditional gender roles, prioritizing their responsibilities in the home as caretakers, nurturing mothers, and supportive spouses. Congress initially opposed granting women positions of control within institutions, prioritizing their symbolic representation.

---

**REFERENCES :**

---

1. Kumari, S. (2019). Role of Women in Civil Disobedience Movement: With Special Reference to Bihar. *Mind and Society*, 8(03-04), 53–59. <https://doi.org/10.56011/mind-mri-83-4-20199>
2. Aparna Basu, 'The role of Women in the Indian Struggle for Freedom', in B. R. Nanda ed., *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1976, p. 23.
3. Singh S, "Contribution of women of Bundelkhand in the freedom struggle - Dr. (Ms.) Sharad Singh - Published in Navbharat" [https://sharadakhara.blogspot.com/2019/08/blog-post\\_15.html](https://sharadakhara.blogspot.com/2019/08/blog-post_15.html)
4. Singh AK, "Role of women in civil disobedience movement- Avadh Ki Aawaz" (*Avadh Ki Aawaz*, October 1, 2019) <https://avadhkiaawaz.com/thought-discussion/savinay/>
5. Kohli K, "Explain the Participation of Women in the Civil Disobedience Movement' - Quiz" (*My India*, March 15, 2023) <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/quiz/explain-the-participation-of-women-in-the-civil-disobedience-movement>
6. Anup Taneja, *Gandhi Women and National Movement, 1920-47*, HarAnand, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 118-19
7. Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert (2006), *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 70.
8. Monjita Basumatary, Dr. Seema Rani (2022), *Assessment Of The Contribution Of Indian Women In Freedom Struggle*, *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 2022, Vol. 6, No. 9, 4581-4583
9. Rani, S. (2020). Role of women in Indian Freedom Movement. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 8(4).
10. Singh, M. (2014). Role of Women in India's Struggle for Freedom. *International Journal of Research (IJR)*, 1(2), 37-56.
11. Mr. Garje Bablu Dilip (2020), *The Role of Women in India's Freedom Struggle: A Historical Perspective*, *IJFANS International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences*, Volume 09, Issue 03, 2020