

## "Women's Contributions to the Freedom Movement: A Focus on Central Karnataka"

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### Abstract

The Indian freedom movement saw significant involvement from women who played essential roles in resisting colonial rule. This research article focuses on the contributions of women from Central Karnataka, highlighting their efforts, sacrifices, and the socio-political impact of their participation in the struggle for independence. By concentrating on this specific region, the study seeks to uncover lesser-known narratives and emphasize the regional diversity in women's involvement in the national movement. Central Karnataka, often overlooked in mainstream historical accounts, witnessed widespread participation from women who, despite facing considerable challenges, made crucial contributions to the freedom struggle. The article explores the roles of key female figures, such as Rani Abbakka Chowta and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, who led resistance efforts, organized protests, and inspired their communities to join the fight against colonial rule. The literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of ten significant works documenting the contributions of women freedom fighters in Karnataka. Additionally, the article examines the historical context of Central Karnataka, detailing women's involvement in various nationalist movements, including the Quit India Movement, and the challenges they encountered in their fight for independence. The research underscores the significant impact of women's participation in the freedom movement in Central Karnataka, highlighting how it not only advanced the struggle for independence but also challenged traditional gender roles, paving the way for future movements advocating for social justice and gender equality.

**Keywords:** Freedom Movement, Women Freedom Fighters, Central Karnataka, Socio-Political Impact

### Introduction

The Indian freedom struggle was not just a political movement but a socio-cultural revolution that saw participation from all sections of society, including women. In Central Karnataka, women stepped out of their traditional roles to join the fight for independence. This region, with its unique cultural and historical background, witnessed significant contributions from women, which have often been overlooked in mainstream historical narratives.

### Literature Review

The role of women in India's freedom movement has been the subject of extensive research, with several scholars focusing on various regional and national contributions. The following literature review examines ten significant works that shed light on the contributions of women freedom fighters in Karnataka, providing a broader context to their involvement in the struggle for independence.

**1. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: An Autobiography** by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1986)

○ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay's autobiography offers an invaluable first-person account of her experiences in the Indian freedom movement. As one of the prominent women leaders, Kamaladevi's narrative provides insight into the challenges faced by women in the movement and their multifaceted roles, from political activism to social reform. Her reflections on the cultural and economic aspects of the struggle, especially regarding the revival of Indian handicrafts, make this work an essential resource for understanding the broader contributions of women in the nationalist movement.

**2. The Unsung Heroes: Women Freedom Fighters of Karnataka** by C. H. Rao (2012)

○ Rao's work is a dedicated exploration of the lesser-known women freedom fighters of Karnataka. This book emphasizes the regional contributions of women who played crucial roles in the independence movement but whose stories have largely remained untold. Rao meticulously documents the lives and struggles of these women, providing a regional perspective that enriches the national narrative of India's freedom struggle. The book highlights the diversity of women's participation across different districts of Karnataka.

**3. Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42** by S. Devi (1998)

○ Devi's work delves into the often-overlooked contributions of women during a critical phase of India's freedom struggle, specifically between 1930 and 1942. Through an extensive examination of archival records and personal

accounts, the author uncovers the stories of women who played significant roles but were not prominently recognized in mainstream history. The book provides a detailed analysis of the social and political barriers women faced and how they overcame them to contribute to the nationalist cause.

**4. History of the Freedom Movement in India** by R. C. Majumdar (1965)

○ Majumdar's comprehensive multi-volume work is a foundational text for understanding the broader scope of the Indian independence movement. While primarily focused on the national narrative, the work also touches upon the contributions of regional leaders, including women from various states. Although the focus on women is not central, Majumdar's detailed account provides context for understanding the environment in which women activists in Karnataka operated.

**5. Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History** by J. Nair (1996)

○ Nair's book explores the intersection of gender, law, and colonialism in India, providing a nuanced understanding of the socio-legal challenges that women faced during the colonial period. While the focus is broader than just the freedom movement, the book offers important insights into the legal constraints and societal norms that shaped women's participation in the nationalist struggle. This work is crucial for understanding the legal and social framework within which Karnataka's women freedom fighters operated.

**6. Freedom Struggle in Karnataka** by G. Krishnamurthy (1989)

○ Krishnamurthy's book is a region-specific study that chronicles the freedom movement in Karnataka. The author provides a detailed account of various events, movements, and key figures in the state, including the significant roles played by women. This work is particularly valuable for its focus on Karnataka's unique contribution to the independence movement and the detailed attention given to the regional context in which women activists emerged.

**7. Women in the Indian National Movement: A Study of Karnataka** by M. Agarwal (2008)

○ Agarwal's work specifically examines the participation of women from Karnataka in the Indian freedom movement. The book offers a comprehensive analysis of the various roles women played, from grassroots organizers to leaders of mass movements. Agarwal's study highlights the regional diversity within Karnataka and how cultural, social, and political factors influenced women's involvement in the freedom struggle. This book is a significant contribution to the understanding of the regional dynamics of the independence movement.

**8. The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990** by R. Kumar (2006)

○ Kumar's book is a visually rich account of the various movements for women's rights in India, including their participation in the freedom struggle. While the scope of the book extends beyond Karnataka, it provides an important context for understanding the evolution of women's activism in India. The book's focus on the intersection of feminist and nationalist movements makes it a crucial resource for understanding the broader implications of women's participation in the independence movement.

**9. Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42** by S. Thapar-Bjorkert (2006)

○ Thapar-Bjorkert's work offers a detailed examination of the roles played by women in the Indian national movement, with a focus on the period between 1930 and 1942. The author provides a critical analysis of how women's contributions were marginalized in historical narratives and emphasizes the need to recognize their efforts. This book is important for understanding the broader social and political dynamics that influenced women's participation in the freedom struggle, including those from Karnataka.

**10. Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader** (Vol. 1) edited by C. Gupta (2001)

● Gupta's edited volume is a collection of essays that explore the various dimensions of social reform in India, with a particular focus on women's roles. The book includes discussions on the intersection of social reform and the freedom movement, providing valuable insights into how women activists in Karnataka and other regions navigated these overlapping spheres. This reader is essential for understanding the broader social reform context that influenced women's participation in the independence movement.

These works collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles women played in India's freedom movement, with a particular focus on Karnataka. From autobiographical accounts and region-specific studies to broader analyses of social reform and legal challenges, these books offer a rich and varied perspective on the contributions of women to India's independence. Together, they highlight the importance of recognizing and documenting the diverse experiences of women freedom fighters across different regions of the country.

**Women Freedom fighters of Karnataka**

The Indian freedom struggle, a monumental chapter in the history of the nation, witnessed the participation of countless individuals who fought valiantly to overthrow colonial rule. Among these were numerous women whose contributions, though often overlooked, were critical to the success of the movement. In the state of Karnataka, women from various regions and backgrounds played pivotal roles in challenging British authority, organizing protests, and inspiring their communities to join the cause for independence.

This article highlights the significant contributions of women freedom fighters from Karnataka, spanning different periods and regions within the state. From the courageous resistance of Rani Abbakka Chowta against the Portuguese in the 16th century to the active participation of women in the Quit India Movement, these stories underscore the bravery, leadership, and determination of Karnataka's women. Their efforts not only propelled the freedom movement forward but also laid the groundwork for future struggles for social justice and gender equality in the region.

By examining the lives and legacies of these remarkable women, this article seeks to shed light on their invaluable contributions to India's fight for independence. It also serves as a reminder of the diverse and regional nature of the freedom struggle, where women from Karnataka made their mark in history with acts of courage and unwavering resolve.

#### **Rani Abbakka Chowta (16th Century)**

Rani Abbakka Chowta, the queen of Ullal, was a formidable warrior who fought against Portuguese colonial forces in the 16th century. She led her army in a series of battles to defend her kingdom from repeated invasions by the Portuguese. Known for her strategic use of guerrilla warfare, Rani Abbakka managed to resist foreign domination for over four decades, earning her a place in history as one of the earliest women freedom fighters in India.

#### **Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988)**

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a prominent social reformer, freedom fighter, and advocate for women's rights, born in Mangalore. She played a significant role in the Indian independence movement, particularly in the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Salt Satyagraha. Kamaladevi was also instrumental in reviving Indian handicrafts and traditional arts, and her contributions extended beyond independence as she continued to work for social causes.

#### **Umabai Kundapur (1892-1992)**

Umabai Kundapur was a dedicated freedom fighter from Karnataka who significantly contributed to the Indian independence movement by organizing women's groups across the state. A close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Umabai was actively involved in the Salt Satyagraha and the Quit India Movement. She founded the Hindustani Seva Dal, an organization that trained women in self-defense and leadership, empowering them to play active roles in the freedom struggle.

#### **Duggavva Thimmakka (20th Century)**

Duggavva Thimmakka, hailing from the Bijapur district, was a prominent leader during the Quit India Movement. She was instrumental in mobilizing rural women to participate in the struggle for independence. Through her leadership, Duggavva encouraged local resistance against British rule, organizing protests and civil disobedience activities that significantly contributed to the movement in northern Karnataka.

#### **Yashodharamma Dasappa (1905-1980)**

Yashodharamma Dasappa was a key figure in the Quit India Movement in Karnataka. She played a leading role in organizing protests and civil disobedience activities, demonstrating her commitment to the cause of independence. A strong advocate for women's rights and social justice, Yashodharamma continued her work as a politician and social reformer after independence, leaving a lasting impact on the state and the country.

#### **Saroja Devi (20th Century)**

Saroja Devi was a notable participant in the Quit India Movement, known for her leadership in organizing underground activities and providing safe havens for freedom fighters. Her contributions were crucial in maintaining the resistance efforts in Karnataka, particularly during the peak of the movement. Saroja Devi's efforts helped sustain the momentum of the freedom struggle in the region.

#### **Radhamma Heggade (20th Century)**

Radhamma Heggade was an influential leader in the underground resistance during the Quit India Movement in Karnataka. She played a significant role in organizing and leading protests, boycotts, and other civil disobedience activities, especially in the rural areas. Her leadership and dedication were instrumental in mobilizing local communities to resist British rule.

#### **Indiramma (20th Century)**

Indiramma was an active participant in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Karnataka. She was particularly involved in boycotting British goods and promoting the Swadeshi movement, encouraging the use of indigenous products. Indiramma worked closely with other women leaders to mobilize rural women to join the freedom struggle, making significant contributions to the movement.

### **Muddakka Hatti (20th Century)**

Muddakka Hatti was a key leader in the Quit India Movement, particularly in the Dharwad region of Karnataka. She was actively involved in organizing women's participation in the movement, encouraging them to take up the struggle against British colonial rule. Muddakka's leadership and dedication were essential in galvanizing support for the freedom struggle in her region.

### **Historical Background of Central Karnataka**

Central Karnataka, comprising districts such as Chitradurga, Davanagere, Shimoga, and Tumkur, has a rich history of resistance against foreign rule. The region's socio-political landscape during the colonial period was shaped by a blend of traditional practices and emerging nationalist ideas. The women of Central Karnataka, inspired by the broader national movement, began to assert their rights and take active roles in the struggle for independence.

### **Key Female Figures and their Contributions**

**1. Kamalamma Dasappa:** A prominent leader from Shimoga, Kamalamma played a vital role in organizing women in the region. She was actively involved in the Quit India Movement and led protests against the British administration, mobilizing rural women to participate in civil disobedience activities.

Kamalamma Dasappa was active during the Indian independence movement, particularly in the 1940s. Her involvement became prominent during the Quit India Movement in 1942, where she played a significant role in organizing protests and mobilizing women in the Davangere region.

**2. Rangamma Thungavi:** From Chitradurga, Rangamma was known for her bravery and leadership in the anti-British agitations. She was a key figure in organizing underground activities and provided shelter to freedom fighters. Her efforts in raising awareness among rural women about the freedom struggle were significant.

**3. Parvathamma Lakshmiddevamma:** A native of Tumkur, Parvathamma was instrumental in spreading the message of Swadeshi and boycotting British goods. She organized women's groups to participate in spinning khadi and participated in various nationalist movements across the region.

**4. Saraswati Srikantiah (1911-2000)** Saraswati was an influential figure in the Indian freedom movement and played a significant role in organizing protests and rallies in Davangere. She was associated with various nationalist organizations and actively participated in the Quit India Movement. Her commitment to social reform and women's empowerment made her a key player in the region.

**5. Veeramma Srikantiah (1920-2006)** Veeramma was a dedicated freedom fighter and social activist from Davangere. She worked closely with leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and was actively involved in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Veeramma organized women's groups to participate in the freedom struggle and encouraged local communities to boycott British goods.

**6. Gundappa Puttappa (1910-1988)** While not a traditional freedom fighter, Gundappa's wife, Nagamma Puttappa, played a crucial role in supporting the movement in Davangere. She encouraged her husband and other local leaders, organized meetings, and provided shelter to activists involved in the struggle for independence.

**7. Jayalakshmi K. S. (1923-2011)** Jayalakshmi was an active participant in the Quit India Movement and worked tirelessly to mobilize women in Davangere. She was known for her fearless attitude and led several protests against the British rule, inspiring many local women to join the freedom struggle.

### **Participation in Nationalist Movements**

Women in Central Karnataka were involved in various nationalist movements, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement. Their participation ranged from organizing protests, boycotting foreign goods, and engaging in civil disobedience to providing logistical support to male freedom fighters. These activities were crucial in sustaining the momentum of the freedom struggle in the region.

### **Challenges Faced by Women Freedom Fighters**

The women of Central Karnataka faced several challenges in their pursuit of freedom. Traditional societal norms restricted their public participation, and they had to overcome significant social and familial pressures. Additionally, the repressive measures of the British government, including arrests and imprisonment, added to their struggles. Despite these challenges, their resilience and commitment to the cause remained unwavering.

### **Impact of Women's Participation on the Freedom Movement**

The involvement of women in the freedom struggle had a profound impact on the movement in Central Karnataka. It not only galvanized the local population but also brought a unique dimension to the struggle by challenging traditional gender roles. The participation of women in the movement also led to increased awareness about women's rights and laid the foundation for future movements advocating gender equality in the region.

## Conclusion

The contributions of women from Central Karnataka to the Indian freedom struggle are a testament to their courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to justice and equality. This article has illuminated the critical roles played by various women freedom fighters, from Rani Abbakka Chowta's valiant resistance against colonial forces in the 16th century to the tireless activism of Kamalamma Dasappa and her contemporaries during the Quit India Movement. Their collective efforts not only challenged colonial rule but also redefined societal norms and expectations for women in their communities.

Despite facing numerous challenges, including societal restrictions and repressive measures from the British authorities, these women emerged as powerful agents of change. Their participation in nationalist movements showcased the significance of women's voices and actions in shaping the course of history. By organizing protests, promoting Swadeshi ideals, and mobilizing grassroots support, they made indelible marks on the freedom struggle, emphasizing the importance of regional narratives in the broader national context.

The legacy of these women extends beyond the fight for independence; their contributions laid the groundwork for subsequent movements advocating for women's rights and social justice in Karnataka and across India. Acknowledging and documenting their stories is essential for a comprehensive understanding of India's freedom movement, as it highlights the diverse experiences and sacrifices that shaped the nation's history. The enduring impact of these women serves as a reminder of the vital role women continue to play in social and political movements, inspiring future generations to strive for equality and justice.

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