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## **Contribution of Muslim Women's Participation in Non-Cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement with Special Focus on Bengal**

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### ***Abstract:***

*In the aftermath of the First World War, indications of far-reaching changes in Indian politics became evident. Mahatma Gandhi's rise in national politics certainly brought novelty to the nationalist movement. The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the martial law in the Punjab intensified the anti-British imperialism of the common people. After that came the Khilafat problem. Gandhiji associated himself with the Khilafat movement at its full height. Gandhiji associated himself and the Indian National Congress with the Khilafat movement in a sincere attempt to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity. The decision of boycott of British goods was taken based on this decision and the non-cooperation movement started and took the form of mass movement. This movement played a very important role in Bengal as well.*

***Keywords:*** *Khilafat Movement, INC, Non-Cooperation Movement, Hindu-Muslim-unity.*

A major historical event of the present era was the emergence of India as a nation and the rise of a powerful anti-imperialist and Nationalist movement. The foundation of the Indian National Movement was laid by the emerging group of the modern intelligentsia. Initially, the modern intellectuals adopted a very positive approach towards the colonial rule. They hoped that India's contact with Britain, even though in a subordinate position, would help transform India also into Britain's image. Politically they were enthralled by the heady concepts of popular sovereignty, democracy, of the freedom of the press. The wide hopes of the intellectuals were expressed in the widespread phrase that the British rule was providential that is God sent.

The second half of the 19th century saw the intellectuals gradually lose faith in the British Government as their expectations increasingly fell short of their hopes. With the expansion of the Empire's strength, exploitation rather than industrialization followed. The colonialist's economy developed in place of the country's modern capitalist economy. The more astute Indians like Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade and R.C Dutta soon saw that the poverty, economic backwardness, and underdevelopment of India would be the inevitable results of the Colonial relationship between India and Britain.<sup>1</sup> What is more significant, the period of the development of industrial capitalism in Britain witnessed underdevelopment of India.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the above backdrop is an unique phenomenon for the intellectuals of India.

### **Return of Gandhi:**

On his return to India around 1915 after his long-drawn struggle for the cause of the Indians settled in South Africa, Gandhiji received warm and big welcome from the Indian's masses. His arrival in India was a turning point in Indian struggle for freedom. He was venerated as a messiah, a harbinger of peace and huge masses were drawn towards his charismatic personality from various sections of society irrespective of caste, creed or social status. His accomplishments in South Africa were well known to the Indian populace, and his straightforwardness, humility, and straightforward, down-to-earth aesthetic made it simpler and easier for people to recognize him. Little wonder then that when Gandhi made his non-cooperation program known to the masses the response was overwhelming with men and women from different sections of the society extending their whole-hearted support.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale had already hailed him as being, " without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made". The veteran Indian leader noticed in Gandhi more important qualities. He saw that Gandhiji had in him the marvelous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs.<sup>2</sup>

On Gokhale's advice and in keeping with his own style of never intervening in a situation without first studying in with great care Gandhiji decided that for the

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<sup>1</sup> Chandra, Bipan; Essays on Indian nationalism, Har-Anand Publication. Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2005, p-64.

<sup>2</sup> Tendulkar, D.G.; Mahatma, life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 8 volumes, New Delhi, 1969 reprint volume .2. p-52.

first year he would not take a public stand on any political issues. He spent the year travelling around the country, seeing things for himself and organizing his Ashram in Ahmedabad where he and his devoted band of followers who had come with him from South Africa, would lead a community life. His own political understanding did not concede with any of the political currents that were active in India then, his faith in moderate method was long eroded, nor did he agree with the home rules that the best time to agitate for home rule was when the British were in difficulty because of the first World War. He was deeply convinced eventually that none of these methods of political struggle were really viable. The only answer lay in *satyagraha*.<sup>3</sup> while discovering India newly, he realized that the *satyagraha* was the only way to integrate all the sections of the society including women and peasants in the National Movement.

During the course of 1917 and early 1918 he was involved in three significant struggles in Champaran in Bihar, in Ahmedabad, and in Kheda in Gujarat. The common features of these struggles was that they were related to specific local issues and that they were fought for the economic demands of the masses. Two of these struggles Champaran and Kheda involved the peasants and the one in Ahmedabad involved industrial workers.

Though Gandhiji had arrived in India from South Africa in 1915, the first political struggle was launched by him only in 1919. After the end of World War I there were renewed demands for self-rule. The British government passed the repressive Rowlatt bills at the beginning of 1919 prohibiting public protest and suspending civil liberties. This was when Gandhi began to develop a programme for women.<sup>4</sup> Gandhi formed a *satyagraha* sabha and announced that a *hartal* would take place on 6th of April. On this day, he addressed a gathering of women and impressed upon them the need to take part in the *satyagraha* movement.

### **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:**

On April 1990, at the orders of General Dyer, hundreds of peaceful protesters were massacred at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Men, women and children were killed in this brutal massacre, unmasking Britain's civilizing mission forever.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Chandra, Bipan India's struggle for independence ,1989 Penguin books, page-177.

<sup>4</sup> Forbes, Geraldine; The New Cambridge history of India, iv.2. women in modern India (Cambridge University press, 1996) P-124.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, P.P -124-125.

The Government estimated that 379 people were dead, other estimates were considerably higher, and more than 2000 were wounded. The hunter enquiry committee report informed that as many as 400 people were shot dead and 1200 were injured. There were various atrocities where suffering was inflicted upon women and their modesty was outraged. According to a statement made by twenty-three women, "We were called from our houses whenever we were and collected near the school. We were asked to remove our veils. We were abused and harassed to give out the name of Bhai Mool Singh as having lectured against the Government. This incident occurred at the end of Baisakhi in the morning in Mr. Besworth Smith's presence. He spat at us and he and spoke many bad things. He beat some of us with sticks. We were made to stand in rows and to hold our ears. He abused us also saying. Files what can you do, if I shoot you?"<sup>6</sup>

The brutality at Jallianwala Bagh stunned the entire world. But repression was intensified by the British. Punjab was placed under martial law and the people of Amritsar forced into indignities such as crawling on their bellies before the Europeans. Women in large numbers participated to protest the massacre.

Bengal was in the forefront to protest this act of barbarism. Women in Bengal took part in the protest against the massacre in great numbers. Noble laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore was strongly involved in protest against the Raj on a number of occasions, most notably in the movement to resist the 1905 British proposal to split the province of Bengal into two, a plan that was eventually withdrawn following popular resistance. A month after the massacre, Tagore wrote to the viceroy of India, asking to be relieved of the knighthood he had accepted for years earlier.

In retaliation, of Jallianwala Bagh massacre 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 felt to greatly pained at the incidents, and on 18th April 1990 he called of his *satyagraha* campaign. He candidly admitted that his decision to launch the *satyagraha* campaign was a Himalayan miscalculation because the masses were not prepared for this.<sup>7</sup> Through the campaign was called off, it had become very clear by then that women had begun

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<sup>6</sup> Report on the hunter enquiry committee, Indian National Congress statement 581, p-868. M.K

<sup>7</sup> Gandhi. M.K; *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1927 PP-356-58.

to actively associate themselves in the ongoing struggle for Indians Independence.<sup>8</sup>

### **Khilafat Issue: emergence of Gandhi as a leader of Hindu Muslim Unity**

Another important incident to have taken place around the time was the Khilafat question which had enormously agitated the Muslims of India. This issue was related to the Turkish empire and the treatment meted out to the Khalifa who is held in high esteem by the Muslims, by virtue of his being the temporal head of the Muslims all over the world. The Khalifa, are regarded as successors to the prophet Mohammed, commander of the Faithful, the shadow of God on earth - these exalted titles convey the symbolic importance of Khalifa to the community of Islam.<sup>9</sup>

During the period of war, the prime minister of England had given an assurance to the Muslims that no harm would be caused to the Turkish Empire. A deputation of the Muslim Khilafat conference also paid a visit to England with the purpose of putting forward the point of view in regard to Turkey and the Khilafat. The British government however turned down the request of the Muslims. Fears of Muslim disunity were aroused by the decline of the Ottoman Empire—the preeminent Islamic power whose sultan, as caliph, was seen by pan-Islamists as the leader of the worldwide Muslim community. The caliphate was endangered first by Italian attacks (1911) and the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and later by the empire's defeat in World War I (1914–18). Fears of the loss of the Khalifa were intensified by the *Treaty of Sèvres* which dismembered the empire, not only detaching all non-Turkish regions from the empire but also giving parts of the Turkish homeland to Greece and other powers. On 14 May 1920 a draft treaty called the treaty of serves was published setting aside all the assurances given to the Muslims by the British during the war period.

Treaty of Sèvres, (August 10, 1920), post-World War I pact between the victorious Allied powers and representatives of the government of Ottoman Turkey. The treaty abolished the Ottoman Empire and obliged Turkey to renounce all rights over Arab Asia and North Africa. The pact also provided for an independent Armenia, for an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence

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<sup>8</sup> Taneja, Anup; Gandhi women and the national movement, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p-81.

<sup>9</sup> Mineault, Gail; The Khilafat movement, A religious and political mobilization in India (OUP, New Delhi 1982) P.1.

in eastern Thrace and on the Anatolian west coast, as well as Greek control over the Aegean islands commanding the Dardanelles.

A Khilafat committee was formed under the leaders of Ali Brothers, Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Harshad Mohani. Mohammad Ali and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali joined with other Muslim leaders such as Pir Ghulam Mujaddid Sarhandi, Sheikh Shaukat Ali Siddiqui, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Raees-UI-Muhajireen Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Mohammad Farooq Chishti, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Hakim Ajmal Khan to establish the All India Khilafat Committee. The company had its headquarters in Lucknow. They sought to foster Muslim political unification and use their power to uphold the Khalifa. They released the Khilafat Manifesto in 1920, which urged Indian Muslims to band together and hold the British government responsible for maintaining the Khalifa. The Khilafat Committee in Bengal included Mohammad Akram Khan, Manruzzaman Islamabadi, Mujibur Rahman Khan and Chittaranjan Das.[10]

The main objective of the Khilafat movement was to force the British government to change its attitude towards Turkey and restore the Turkish Sultan (Khalifa) to his former position. A countrywide agitation was organized. In February 1920, Gandhiji suggested to the Khilafat committee to adopt a program of non-violent non-cooperation to protest the government's behavior. On 9th June, 1920 the Khilafat committee at Allahabad unanimously accepted his suggestion and asked Gandhiji to lead the movement. The Congress leaders, including Gandhiji viewed the Khilafat agitation as a golden opportunity for cementing the Hindu Muslim unity and bringing the Muslim masses into the national movement. The Congress at its special session in September 1920 at Calcutta supported Gandhiji's plan for non-cooperation for three causes: 1) redressal of the Punjab grievances, 2) rectification of the Khilafat wrongs and 3) the establishment of Swaraj. The people were asked to boycott Government educational institutions, law courts and legislature, to give up using foreign clothes, to surrender officially conferred titles and Honors. Many leading lawyers of the country like C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Mr. Jayakar, Saifuddin Kichloo, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, T. Prakasham and Ashraf Ali gave up their lucrative practices, and their sacrifice became a source of inspiration for many. In numbers Bengal leaders were followed by Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Karnataka. Though India sought to refuse to cooperate with the British Government, they incorporated progressive programs of the non-cooperation

movement included establishment of National School and Colleges, Panchayat, popularization of Swadeshi and Khadi, development of Hindu Muslim Unity, removal of untouchability etc.

The Indian National Movement was quite radical by contemporary standards. It was oriented towards the poor from the beginning. The poverty of the people was the starting point of Dadabhai Naoroji's economic critique of colonialism. This pro-poor orientation was further strengthened by the advent of Gandhiji and the rise of a strong socialist current.

The national movement was based on the assumption that certain elements of structure, unity, and nationhood were present in India's history though it was not yet a structured Nation. From the very beginning Gandhi very consciously integrated various sections of the society, such as peasants, Muslims and women and untouchables who are reprogrammed and included for the success of the national movement. Gandhiji observed "I discovered the weapon of non-cooperation in the form we know while thinking about the khilafat. I feel very much about this issue because I am a staunch Hindu. If I wish to see my religion protected against 7 crores of Muslims, I must be ready even to die for the protection of their religion.... I do not believe that the Muslims will betray us once their end has been achieved.

Those, who believe in religion do not betray anyone. I do not know of a single instance in history of a great sacrifice by the Hindus having gone unrewarded. What was done before now was a kind of bargaining. There is no place whatever for bargaining in our dealing today. The Hindus should help the Muslims as a matter of duty and look at God for reward. They must not ask anything of the Muslims. I seldom mention the subject of Cow protection to the Ali Brothers. I have already published the conversation with Maulana Abdul Bari. He knows, all the same, that I have not concealed any hope of being able to melt the heart of Muslims, by dying for them, if need be. It is my conviction that God always regards a good. My prayer is to God. I have sold myself to the Muslims without demanding a price and I ask each and every Hindu to do the same. This is no policy, but plain dealing. I would not have been ready to die for Muslims if their case had been weak. If knowing their case to be obviously just, I remained aloof through doubt or fear, my Hinduism would be disgraced and I would have failed in my duty as the neighbor.

I know that the khilafat agitation is not a political weapon. It is the duty of all Muslims to defend the khilafat. It is a different matter that Hindus may not regard it as their duty as well. The Muslims will not accept cow protection as a religious duty. But all Muslims know that for the Hindus it is so. In the same way, all Hindu's must know that to defend the khilafat is a religious Duty for the Muslims. I have a great respect for the devotion of the Ali brothers to their religion. They would not have become fakirs just for the sake of political benefits. Of course, fighting for the khilafat will increase the powers of Islam.

It is no crime to rejoin at this. The Muslims cannot but big glad, and if we wish that people of other faiths should be happy at the awakening of a new spirit in Hinduism and its regeneration, we Hindus should also be glad at the regeneration of Islam”<sup>10</sup>

While inspiring the Hindu and the Muslim women to take up the weaving as an integral part of the movement, Gandhi observed that if Hindu and Muslim women take to spinning and Hindu and Muslim weavers take to weaving then within a short time the country will be able to produce all the cloth it needs.

“I wish, therefore to draw the attention of all, specially of women, to the example that Damnagar has set. But what can women do about it, so long as men do not provide them with spinning wheels and silvers of cotton by getting cotton carded by local carders? I trust, therefore, that at least and few public-spirited men will come forward in every village, who at a little trouble to themselves, will undertake to procure cotton, get it carded and turn into cotton rolls and supply them to women who may be prepared to spin. This is a business in which no loss is possible. Only last week we saw the instance of Dhasa where men and women not only spin and weave but for the most part use cloth made in their own village and sent out the surplus, if any, to other villages. There is no starvation, there cannot be any in that village. With a little effort, things can be planned in a similar way in every village in India .<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi sternly warned the government that if justice was denied to the Muslim, he would be left with no other option but to resume *Satyagraha* Urging the Hindu and Muslim women to adopt Swadeshi goods and to start using the

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<sup>10</sup> Ref. Razzaq, Rana. "Khan, Mohammad Akram". Banglapedia. Bangladesh Asiatic Society. Archived from the original on 6 July 2017. Retrieved 16 July 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Navjivan ,30 January ,1921. Gujarati Navjivan, 4-7-1920 CWMG, Vol. XVII, P-8.

spinning-wheel, Gandhiji made it plain that the Khilafat agitation will benefit the cause of Swadeshi.<sup>12</sup>

But the resolve not to use articles made in Europe only so long as the khilafat issue remained unsolved did not seem proper to him.

Muslims ought not to use European goods even if they get full justice on the Khilafat question. Moreover, it is not enough to boycott European goods alone. No foreign goods, including Japanese goods, should be used. The Swadeshi Movement was intended for a permanent change. According to Gandhiji, no matter how justly or unjustly the Europeans dealt with the Indians it was the duty of the Indians to use only Swadeshi goods so that India may prosper and get perfect justice. The country could prosper through the spinning wheel and the Handloom.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Nagpur session: A move towards inclusive mass movement:**

At the special session of the Indian National Congress held on 4th September in Calcutta the Congress decided to give full support to Gandhi's noncooperation. The decision of non-cooperation movement was endorsed at the annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur in December 1920. Thus, the stage was prepared for the first struggle to be carried out in a purely nonviolent manner against one of the mightiest Imperial powers known to the history of mankind. Gandhiji promised that if the program was fully implemented, Swaraj would be ushered in within the year. The Nagpur session committed the Congress to a program of extra constitutional mass action. Many groups of revolutionaries, especially in Bengal, also pledged support to the movement.

To enable the Congress to fulfill its new commitment, significant changes were introduced in its creed as well as in its organizational structure. The goal of the Congress was changed from the attainment of self-government by constitutional and legal means to the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means. The new constitution of the Congress The handiwork and Gandhiji, introduced other important changes. The membership fee was reduced to four annas per year to enable the poor to become members. The Nagpur session empowered the Congress to integrate every section of the society in the national movement.

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<sup>12</sup> Manmohan Kaur, *Women in India's freedom struggle*, sterling, New Delhi, 1985, p-140.

<sup>13</sup> Ektaa Jain, *Khadi and Contemporary Fashion: The National Movement and Postmodern Context* (Unpublished M.Phil dissertation CSSS/ SSS, JNU. New Delhi) (2014)

### **Muslim women in the Khilafat:**

Women constituted a powerful group within the Khilafat movement. They extended their support to the movement both morally and financially by giving their ornaments in Charity. In a letter, sir Harcourt Butler to Lord Harding, underlined the important role played by women in the movement. He writes, "The priests and women are the most important influences in India ..... and I am not very much afraid of the politicians until they play on these two."<sup>14</sup>

As the Khilafat movement gained momentum, Gandhi deputed Sarala Devi Chaudhari , nice of Rabindranath Tagore and founder of the Bharat Sri Mahamandal in Lahore to visit Bareilly . Writing about her experience in Bareilly to Gandhi in May 1920, she recorded that she had made considerable headway in her promotion of chakra and Swadeshi among the Muslim women. At one place, ladies - a wife and a sister took the vow. It was a family of Kutchi Vohra's, very rich and culture settle down here since the days of the mutiny. She wrote to Gandhi she was so encourage by the response to her efforts that she reported, "I find I can do the Swadeshi and charkha propaganda to perfection in these provinces."<sup>15</sup> At a meeting in Bareilly organized by Begum Hazrat Mohani Mohamadan ladies took the Swadeshi vow.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhiji made special effort to secure the Muslim women's participation in the non-cooperation movement. To ensure this he deftly avoided making references to Hindu mythology and scriptures which he generally employed to draw the Hindu women. When he appeared with Maulana Shaukat Ali to address a Muslim women's meeting at Patna, he deliberately avoided mentioning Ram, Sita Ravan, Draupadi and so on. He urged the Hindu and Muslim women to unite together in a split of harmony and to strengthen the movement by taking to charkha and spinning. In order to gain their whole heart support, he told the Muslim women that whatever was written in the Holy Quran was all good and there was truth in all religions. He told them that British rule was the rule of Satan and exhorted them to renounce foreign clothes to save Islam.

In order to make the Khilafat and the non-cooperation movements popular among the Muslim women religious items and anti-British sentiments were skillfully

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<sup>14</sup> Mineault, Gail; *The Khilafat movement, A religious and political mobilization in India* (OUP, New Delhi, 1982) p-429

<sup>15</sup> *Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume- XVII, p-429.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid, P-429.*

used. Indeed, Muslim women become a powerful opinion group within the Khilafat movement, supporting it morally with their firm religious faith and functionally, with their ornaments. The women who played an active role during the movement was the indefatigable Ali matriarch Bi Amman. She was the mother of Ali Brothers and commanded to great respect in political circles. She was vehemently opposed to the idea of women remaining confined to their home and not associating themselves with political activities. She had earlier been associated with women through meetings to support the work of the Anjuman-e-Khuda-e-kaabaa collect of funds to maintain the house of the Kaaba and other Muslim holy places and to defend them against non-Muslim aggression, purpose which they emphasized were strictly religious, having nothing to do with politics.<sup>17</sup>

### **Women in Bengal**

One of the basic tenets of philosophy of Ahimsa or nonviolence is that it is necessary to build moral power. As Gandhi emerged as the country's political leader, he called for the people to arm themselves morally and declared that the eradication of untouchability, the acceptance of equality for women, liberation from creeping superstition and fear, and the cultivation of Humanism were critical to this argument. Gandhi directly declared the equality for women would be one of the central objectives of his political program. With all the persuasiveness and charisma at his command, he urged women to step out of their homes and join him. In the first non-cooperation agitation itself, the participation of women became very much evident. In different parts of Bengal women joined the procession, propagate the use of khadi and charkha and some of them even took the extreme step of leaving Government schools and colleges.

Deshbandhu Chitranjan Das and his wife Basanti Devi took the leadership of non-cooperation Movement in Bengal. On 7th December 1921, along with Urmila Devi (the sister-in-law) and Sunita Devi (niece of C.R Das) was arrested for selling khaddar in Calcutta. Meanwhile they were released within few hours. The arrest of these ladies inspired the women and youth of Bengal to do any sacrifice for the nation. When news of their arrest spread, a huge crowd of Marwaris, Muslims, Bhatias, Sikhs, Millhands and school boys gathered around until the police released those women. Muslim women supported the program of selling

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<sup>17</sup> Chaudharani, Maitrayee Indian women's movement, Reform and revival Radiant publishers, New Delhi, 1993, p-129.

khaddar by the women of the Das family. When C. R Das was in prison, Basanti Devi become the President of the Bengal provincial Congress during 1921- 22 and presided over its session in Chittagong in 1922. Thus a Bengali women for the first time came to occupy a prominent position in the political leadership of the country. In her presidential speech she insisted upon the reconstruction of rural India. She called upon the people of Bengal to make politics and integral part of their life. She expressed her believe that human excellence in its totally only could enable want to get near the truth.<sup>18</sup>

At that time Nari Karma Mandir was centre of Satyagraha movement established by Urmila Devi in Bhawanipur Calcutta. The main object of it was to popularize the use of charkha women. Many Satyagrahi women of 1930 movement came from the centre. Mohini Dasgupta wife of Raibahadur Tadak Chandra Dasgupta (a government servant) entered into Nationalist politics after the death of her husband. Along with her daughter, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. She had volunteered herself in spinning charkha, motivating the ladies to use Khaddar and selling it door to door in Calcutta. Another brave lady was Jyotirmoy Ganguly, the daughter of industrial parents Dwarkanath Ganguly and Kadambini Ganguli. She completed her master's degree and taught in different school and colleges all over India. After resigning from the teaching profession in Ceylon, she joins the movement and organized the first woman volunteer crops in Calcutta Congress 1920. Throughout 1921-22 she actively participated in the agitation. Popularly known as Devi Chaudharani, she had great contribution in 1930 movements. She was a great pioneer of female education associated with Vidhyasagar Vani Bhavan and Mahila Atmarakh Samiti. Hemoprabha Majumdar, wife of Congress leader Basanta Majumdar was the most compared women complete women leader. She was one of the Founder members of Swarajya party, established by CR Das In 1922, she established Mohila Karmi Samshad. The main object of this organization was to give vocational training to women and infused the spirit of nationalism among themselves. A women's hostel for the destitute was also run by the samsad. Hemoprabha had played a significant role in steamer strikes of Chandpur and Goyaland (1921), letter she went to Narayanganj and established a women's organization there. After returning to Calcutta, she became injured by police while leading a woman

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<sup>18</sup> Forbes, Modern women in India, P-126.

procession.<sup>19</sup> In 1925 when Sarojini Naidu became the president of Congress, Hemoprabha extended helping hands to her.

The women of mufassil area did not tag behind. Boycott of union board in Midnapur became successful because women supported it.<sup>20</sup>

The women of Calcutta have obstructed the gentleman of Calcutta by trying to sell Khadi and a telegram in the newspaper has announced that they have been consequently arrested. The company includes that devoted partner of the president elect, his widow sister and his niece. I had hoped that in the initial stages, at any rate women would be spread the honor of going to jail. They were not to become aggressive civil resisters. But the Bengal Government, in their Imperial zeal to make no distinction even of sex, have conferred the honor up three women of Calcutta. I hope the whole country will welcome this innovation. The women of India should have as much share in winning Swaraj as men. Probably in this peaceful struggle women can out distance man by many a mile. We know that she is any day superior to man in her religious devotion. Gandhi was overwhelmed when girls and young married women in Bengal had come to him and told him that they could not use jewelry for they were at present in a state of widowhood without Swaraj.<sup>21</sup>

### **Muslim women participation in the non-cooperation movement in Bengal**

Role of women in the history of the freedom movement of India is remarkable. Though women did not take part directly in politics in the early stage of the freedom movement, yet they helped the movement indirectly, many women of remote villages of Bengal also took part actively in the movement and helped the movement directly and indirectly about whom we do not know. Role of Muslim women in the freedom struggle is very important and also in the Bengal, the Bengali Muslim women participation also very important in the history of National Movement in the history.

It was not very easy to task for the revolutionists to win freedom. It took long time to prepare the ground for the movement. At first male volunteers participated in the movement. But gradually the women of villages and towns were inspired by the revolutionists. Many women leaving their happy life joined the movement and spent hard life during the movement. This hard life was felt

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<sup>19</sup> Anandabazar Patrika, 17th April, 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Anandabazar Patrika, 17th April, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> Dainik Basumati, 9 February, 1922

to them like bed of roses. Their main moto was to win freedom from the British Government.

Many women were illiterate. They could not write and read. Yet they could understand the importance of the independence of motherland. They bored with the harassment of the public, hanging, jail, beating by cane and boot, bullet and revolver and other such type of repression of Government. They did not care such type of repression. During the first half of the 20th century there were so many superstitions in our society in respect of women. During this time Muslim women did not take general education and even there was no ample scope for female education in villages of Bengal gradually women took education and Society was changed. The leaders of the country at this time instructed the women that women had certain duties in the society in respect of freedom movement. They may change the society and even they may win freedom. In this connection we may say that, along with British rule, came a link with the West, and modern ideas, which were first developed in western Europe, made their entry into India. The winds of change, which took place in the west in the 18th and 19th centuries, would certainly have reached our shores, because India had never followed a closed-door policy. Though trade and travel should have for centuries established channels of communication not only with the countries of Asia but also with Europe. Though these sources, news of events and happenings in Europe and elsewhere and details of new thinking taking place in the west were reaching India since 18 century.

The intellectual life of Indian people began to understand revolutionary changes influenced by such ideas and nationalism, democracy and sovereignty These new Idea's help the people of India to think about their own society, economy, Government and even about the true nature of British imperialism in India.<sup>22</sup>

The spirit of nationalism had been the greatest contribution of the English education and culture in India and the people who first took the advantage and reaped the benefits of the English education were the Bengalis. The freedom struggle in Bengal in particular and for that matter in India therefore began as the movement of the educated middle class and it was not until after the second decade of the present century that the common people had taken any part in it.<sup>23</sup> The most important and creative role in the development of Nationalism in India

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<sup>22</sup> The Search Light, 9.2.1921., CWMG, Volume-XIX, P -335.

<sup>23</sup> Freedom struggle by Bipan Chandra, Amalsh Tripathi and Barun De. P-25-26

was played by the modern intelligentsia. It was the first social group in Bengal led to movements for social change. In the beginning of the 19th Century men such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy deeply felt that the main causes of the defeat of such a vast country as India by a handful of foreigners lay in the weakness of its internal social-economic, political and intellectual make up.<sup>24</sup> Gradually the intellectual group began to understand the basic character of British rule. By the end of the 19th Century, they had come to realize the British interest in India. So, they began to build up a Nationalist political movement against imperialism.

During the second half of the 19th Century, we can see we see the flowering of national political consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organized national movement. During this period modern intelligentsia not in Bengal but throughout India created by political associations to spread political education and to initiate political work in the country. This work was to be based on new political ideas. A new intellectual perception of reality, new social economic and political objectives, new forces of struggle and resistance and new techniques of political organization took more than half a century of bring the common people within the fold of modern politics.<sup>25</sup>

Razia Khatoon (daughter of Naseeruddin) was the first Muslim lady of Bengal who shoot up against the British. She was arrested and sent to Kalapani where she took her last breath. Akbari Begum was the mother of barrister Asif Ali. She inspired Muslim women through had speeches to join the non-cooperation Movement. In May 1920 she delivered a historic speech in which she said, "we should hold our religion firm and socially boycott the people who oppose it."

The history of freedom movement would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of Asgarhi Begum (mother of Kazi Abdul Rahim) of Thana Bhawan, Muzaffarnagar who fought the British valiantly and was burnt alive when defeated. Habiba and Rahimi who obstructed the advance of English forces, were hanged. Zehida Khatoon Sherwani wrote patriotic poems to encourage freedom fighters. Khadija Begum joined the non-cooperation movement and went from home to home to inspire women to wear Khadi.

Begum Sakina Luqmani, Fatima Taib Ali, Hizra Begum also participated in the freedom struggle and made rich contributions in various ways. Some of the

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<sup>24</sup> Indian history Congress journal (34th session) The Socio-Political roots of nationalism by Dr. Hitesh Ranjan sanyal. pp-52-53.

<sup>25</sup> Freedom struggle by Bipan Chandra, AmlesTripathi and Barun De p-34.

Muslim women imprisoned, fined and suffered at the hands of the British for freedom movement and their contribution cannot be denied.<sup>26</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Although women's participation in first non-cooperation movement was not on a mass scale and was mainly confined to those whose husband, father, brother and sons had already joined this struggle and were in jail,<sup>28</sup> there can be no denying that Indian women and especially in Bengal had made significant contributions both to the khilafat causes and to the non-cooperation campaign initiated by Gandhi. A government of India Publication observed that the growing interest displayed among middle class women in political and social questions, their increasing prominence on this platform and in the press... must be taken as the dawn of a new era, and the fact that the number of women who take part in public life is a still very small, affords no reason for questioning its significance.<sup>27</sup> Margaret Cousins also pointed out that the non-cooperation movement gave a big boost to the awakening of Indian women, and that Women's ardent desire for the freedom of their country has given them such personal freedom that they are now welcomed into the open Street as volunteers, as pickets, as politicians. They do not naturally move towards fighting for their own liberation. The Indian National Movement cannot progress without the aid of women, the Liberation of women will be aided by their devotion to the national movement. At the end of the day, they proved themselves as equal partner for the nation's independence. The real significance of non-cooperation movement was that the Indian Nationalist movement acquired real mass base for the first time with participation of peasants, urban women and workers. At the end of the movement, the women proved themselves as equal partner of national consciousness.

The purpose of the work is to reconstruct the role of Muslim women in the National Movement in Bengal during the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement. Bengali Muslim women's also a special position in the history of the freedom movement in India. Women in large scale in Bengal took part in these movement. Though the majority portion of women of Bengal were illiterate, yet

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid-p-52.

<sup>27</sup> Basu, Aparna; Op.cit.p-22

they showed their courage and took active part in the freedom movement.<sup>28</sup> At the end of the movement the women proved themselves as equal partner of national consciousness.

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<sup>28</sup> Coucins, M.E., *The Awakening of Asian Womanhood* (Ganesh and co. Madras, 1922) P-8 and 59-60.

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