

## Contributions of Karnataka Women to the Indian Independence Movement Jawahar M. Rane

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### ABSTRACT:

This article, “Contributions of Karnataka Women to the Indian Independence Movement,” distinguishes between pre-Gandhian rulers like Kittur Chennamma and actual freedom fighters of the Gandhian era. It highlights the significant role of Karnataka women in the national movement from the 1920s onwards, particularly through participation in the Swadeshi Movement, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India Movement. Prominent figures discussed include Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, a key leader in the Civil Disobedience Movement and international advocate; Umabai Kundapur, organizer of ‘Hindustan Seva-dal’s’ ladies wing and women’s education promoter; and Ballary Sid-damma, the first woman arrested during the Shivapura Congress Session. These women, primarily from educated, upper middle-class backgrounds, propelled the nationalist and unification movements in Karnataka through various acts of Satyagraha, social reform, and public awareness cam-paigns, leaving a lasting, inspirational legacy.

### KEYWORDS:

Karnataka Women, Indian Independence, Gandhian Era, Satyagraha, Unification.

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### Introduction:

Generally, Chandbibi, Belawadi Mallamma, Rani Abbakka, Keladi Chennamma, Kittur Channamma and others during the pre-Gandhian pe-riod have been praised as freedom fighters. But they were not freedom fighters in the real sense. Because some of them like regent queen Chand-abibi of Ahamadnagar, Belawadi Malamma, Keladi Channamma were independent rulers. In the case of Kittur Channamma, it was a feudal struggle. She fought to defend the right of adopted son Shivalinga Sarja. Kittur had been a vassal state under the Bijapur Sultans, the Peshwas and then the British. It had been paying an annual tribute of 1.5 lakh Rupees to the British.

A distinction must be made in the study of freedom struggle in Karnataka Freedom struggle may be defined as the struggle to regain the lost political freedom.

Hence Chandbibi and other independent rulers were great heroines and defenders of freedom but no fighters for freedom. A new light is to be thrown on this aspect. There are no traces of women leaders in the national movement between 1824 and 1920.

### **Women Freedom Fighters in the Gandhian Era**

Gandhiji's influence in Karnataka began with the spread of Swadeshi Movement in various parts in the 1920s. Bhavani Bai Kanagol, Gangabai Mirijankar, Umabai Kundapur and others began to take part in Swadeshi Movement, non-co-operation movement and civil disobedience movement and other forms of Gandhian Satyagraha. Most of them were members of the educated upper middle-class families. Some of them were related to famous political leaders and other leaders belonged to backward classes.

### **Some of the memorable Women Freedom Fighters Were:**

1. Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya (Mangalore)
2. Umabai Kundapur (Hubli)
3. Bellary Siddamma (Haveri)
4. Nagamma Patil (Hubli)
5. Yashodharamma Dasappa (Bangalore)
6. Jayadevithai Ligade (Solapura)
7. Leelavathi Magadi (Hubli)
8. Bhageerathamma (Tumkur)
9. Sunandamma (Tumkur)
10. Krishnabai Panjekar (Honnar)
11. Subbamma Jois (Sirsi Siddapura)
12. Padmavati Bidri Jamakandi)
13. Mylara Siddamethi (Rona Motebennur)
14. Seethabai Madagavankar (Sirsi Motebennur)
15. Kanagodu Bhavani Bai (Sirsi Siddapura)
16. Gangabai Meerjankar (Sirsi)
17. Balya Tandy Muddamma (Virajpet)
18. Kurtha Koti Shakunthala (Belgaum)
19. Devamma Harijan (Sirsi Siddapura)
20. Ramabai Yolgi (Belgaum)
21. T.B. Jayalakshmi Bai (Bellary)
22. Rajamma Theertha Sharma (Bangalore)
23. Siddamma (Isoore)

24. Parvathamma (Isoore)
25. Halamma (Sur)
26. Nagarathamma Hiremath (Chitradurga)
27. M.R. Laxamma (Bangalore) and others

### **1. Kamaladevi Chotopadyaya (1903–88)**

She was a daughter of Ananthaiah D.C. of Mangalore. She received very good education at Mangalore Madras and London and was married to a near relative but she became widow soon after the wedding. Later she married poet Harendranath Chattopadyaya brother of Sarojini Naidu. She became famous as an artist and took part in dramas with her husband. Later she took part in the freedom struggle under the influence of Gandhiji, Anne Basent and Sarojini Naidu. She was an active member of mahila Sevasadan of Poona and Servants of India Society and Poona started by Gokhale. Then she became leader of “All Indian women conference”. In 1930 she took a leading role in Civil Disobedience Movement”. She was a member of the ‘Dandi March’.

In 1930 she guided the Native Women of Mangalore in Congress Satyagraha. In 1930 she toned Europe, America, Japan and Canada and own their support to the freedom movement. She was very active in the “Quit India Movement”. She suffered imprisonment for five years.

After Independence she took a keen interest in “Sangeetha Nataka Academy and ‘Central handicrafts Board’ at Delhi. She got Magasay award from Philippines for her service of the upliftment of women and her contribution to the development on handicrafts. She was also awarded Padmabhushan by the Government on India. She has written many articles and books viz. the spirits Pilgrimage. ‘Women in India’. ‘Reflections After Sixty’ etc.

### **2. Umabai Kundapur (1830)**

Umabai was another remarkable women freedom fighters of Karnataka. She had settled in Hubli in 1923 though she was born in Bombay. She was married to Kumar Ananda Rao. Unfortunately, she became widow at an early age. Then she studied English and French and passed S.S.L.C. She was influenced by Sushila Naik, Kasibai Navarang and others in the basic education of girls. She also took part in the national movement. She organized “Saraswathi Mahila Samaja”. She collected a fund of one lakh rupees for the congress under the influence of Gandhi and N.S. Hardikar. She opened a school at Hubli and it was run by Bhag-

ini Samaja. The school was called Thilak Kanyashala. After the Belgaum Congress Session she toured all over Karnataka and organized ladies wing of the 'Hindustan Sevadal' of N.S. Hardikar. She also took a leading role in the Salt Satyagraha at Ankola and other places in Karnataka. She took part along with her father-in-law Ananda Rao in Civil Disobedience Movement and jailed at Yarawada in poona. After release she activity took part in Adult Education Programmes. She collected funds for 'Kas-turi Trust' and 'Gandhi Trust' for promotion of female education. She used to say "For me Gandhiji is a living God". She is also one of the grand old women of India.

### 3. Ballary Siddamam (1903-82)

She was a native of Dhunsi Village of Haveri Taluk. Her father was a merchant by name Basattappa. She was married to Ballary Murigappa in Davanagere. Though she was not highly education she took an active role in National Movement under the influence of S. Nijalingappa T. Siddalingaiah and Veeranna Gowda Patil. She became famous during the Shivapur Congress Session April 1938. She hoisted the congress flag on the third day of the congress session on 14th April and arrested. She was the first lady to be arrested not only in the Mysore kingdom but also in the entire India. Thereby she made a great news all over India. Thousands of people shouted Bellary all over Kannada speaking areas and addressed rural people and popularized Khadi Movement. The Charaka was proclaimed as the symbol of freedom and prosperity by Siddamam in her public speeches. She took part in toddy tree cutting along with Nagathnana Hiremath and Laxamma Reddy in Chitradurga district under the leadership of S. Nijalingappa. She was arrested and imprisoned in 1939 and 1940.

She helped underground Satyagrahis during the Quit India Movement. After independence she established matrumandira's (Mahila Seva Sanghas) at Chitradurga, Davanagere and other places. She was an M.L.A. from 1951-56 from Davanagere. She was awarded a 'Thamrapatra' for her remarkable service in the freedom struggle.

### 4. Nagamma Patil (1930's and 40's)

She was a wife of Veeranna Gowda Patil of Hubli. She was teacher and freedom fighter. She took part in Harijan Ashram activities at Hubli and Sabramati. She took part in the Belgaum Congress Session.

Both husband and wife devoted their life for the upliftment of Harijan's and attainment of freedom. She was imprisoned at Yarawada jail during the Quit India Movement along with her child. After Independence she was devoted to the promotion of female education through Mahila Vidya Peeta at Hubli.

#### **5. Yashodharamma Dasappa (1905-81)**

She was a daughter of K.H. Ramaiah the founder of Vokkaligara Sangha at Bangalore. She received very good education. Like her father she became a theosophist and took keen interest in social work. Then she joined the political struggle during the Shivapura Congress Session in April 1938. She was married to a lawyer and political leader H.C. Dasappa who played an important role in the Movement of responsible Government in Mysore Kingdom and Unification of Karnataka. During the Satyagraha Movement she was responsible for the burning of the copies of the Jwalamukhi a newspaper in cyclostyle with the support of T. Sunandamma. Subbamma Jois and others. During the Vidhurashwattha flag Satyagraha on 24th April 1938 many were wounded and some were killed in the firing. Yashodharamma served the wounded and helped the members of bereaved families. She was the first women member of the Mysore Congress Working Committee. She visited Gandhiji's Sevagram at Wardha and took inspiration from Kasturi Bai Gandhi. After Independence she was the first women minister of Social Welfare in S. Nijalingappa's cabinet. She had adopted an Harijan girl. She resigned over the question of prohibition demanding its full implementation.

#### **6. Jayadevithai Ligade (1912-1986)**

Jayadevithai Ligade, granddaughter of Mallappa and daughter of Madake, was born in 1912 at Solapur. She played a memorable role in the freedom struggle and the unification of Karnataka. Her grandfather used to feed the poor students. Ranade and Balagangadhara Tilak were his close friends. She was married to Savkar Chammamallappa Mahadevaraya Ligade of Solapur. She was both rich and was married into a rich family. Though she studied Marati, she learnt Kannada under the influence of her mother Sangamma. She made a deep study of Vachana Sahitya. After the death of her husband in 1946 she dedicated herself to the study of Kannada, Marati and Hindi literature and took an active part in the freedom struggle influenced by the great patriots like Ramabhat Rajawaade, Dhana

Shetty Mallppa, she spared no pains for the freedom of the country. Though her husband was pro-British, he did not come in her way of pursuing her policy of fighting for the liberation of the country.

During the Razakaar atrocities in Hyderabad state she jumped into the fray and supplied food and clothing to the sufferers and rendered humanitarian service. In the Karnataka unification movement, she played a vital part. She was responsible for the success of Karnataka sahita sammelana held at Sholapur in 1950. In the Sahitya Sammelana held at Belur in 1952, she mercilessly condemned the idea of forming of dual Karnataka mooted by K.Hanumanthaiah and others and saved the state from being divided into two.

Her patron saint was Sivayogi Siddarameswara of Somalinge. His birth place and his sense of compassion inculcated into her exemplary devotion. She has written more than 25 in Kannada, Marati and in Hindi. For eg. Jayageetha, Tayipadagalu, Siddarameshwar Purana and Taraka Tambura. The poem Higgutide Vishwa, (The world is expanding) Jayageetha book has been translated into 14 language. She has been given national and State award for her book 'Siddarameswara Purana': She made the Marati people conversant with the Sharana literature. The famous books which she wrote in Marati are: Siddha Vani, Basava Darshana, Mahayogini, Siddarama Tripadi (triplets), Basava Vachanamruta and Sunya Sampadane. The last one has been published by the Maharashtra Government. She was the president of the Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held at Mandya in 1947 and she earned the credit of being the first woman president. The Karnataka University enhanced its prestige by conferring upon her the Honorary doctorate. She led a simple life she was a Gandhian and followed the devotional path of the Shivasharanas.

### **7. Leelavathi Magadi (1910)**

She was the only daughter of Veerana Gowa Patil of Hubli who was also a freedom fighter. She studied at Shnatinikethan in 1927, then at Jalandar Kanyamaha Vidyalaya. She took an active role in Satyagraha activities like boycotting, picketing, prabhatpheris, spinning etc, even as a student. She married Venkatesh Magadi who was a youth congress worker. It was an intercaste marriage and the father was not very happy about it. She took an active role in the Quit India Movement along with the husband and was jailed at Hindalgi near Hubli. She was a Deputy Min-

ister in Jatti cabinet. She started a Mahila Vidya Peetha at Hubli.

#### **8. Bhageerathamma (1940's)**

She was a native of Tumkur and was married to a freedom fighter by name Changalaradhyia. When the husband was arrested in 1942 on the Gowri Festival Day, she followed her husband to the jail where she met Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya, Rathnamma Madhava Rao. Kamala Krishnappa, Bhadravathi Laxmidevi and others. Under the influence she took a leading role in the freedom struggle and courted arrest several times. After independence she was the member of Legislative – Assembly for one term. She was a recipient of Thamrapatra. Recently she was honoured on Oct. 2nd, 1988 and a biography was released on the occasion.

#### **9. Sunandamma (1930's)**

She is a teacher, writer and freedom fighter from Tumkur. She has settled at Bangalore. Since her school days she came under the theosophical influence. She was married to Narasimha Iyengar of Doddaballapur. She joined the Mysore Congress under the influence congress president. This was in 1935 he was also inspired by congress veterans like Thagadur Ramachandra Rao, Veerakesari Sitharama Sastri. She took part in Shivapur session, Unite India Movement along with M.R. Laxamma and underwent imprisonment. She was a member of the Mysore Representative Assembly in 1940.

#### **10. Devamma Harijan (1930's)**

Devamma of Sirsi Siddapur was a native of Kelaginamane Village in Siddapur taluk. She took part in the no tax campaign in 1930s under the influence of Gandhi. She was a plantation worker under Nagesh Hegde. Her husband and son Pakeera were also plantation workers. They suffered great miseries of poverty and still responded to the call of Gandhi and took part in the Gandhian Satyagraha. Because of her participation along with the Hegde in 'No Tax Campaign' Hegde's plantation was confiscated by the British. As a result, they lost their lively hood and migrated to Sagar Taluk. She was honoured recently by the State Government. She refused to accept a cheque given by the Government; such was the spirit of her sacrifice. She died in 1966.

#### **11. Seetha Bai Madagokar (1930's & 1940's)**

She belonged to a family of patriots in Siddapur. Her uncle He-

mappa Chandragatagi was a freedom fighter. Her father-in-law Ramakrishna Madagavankar took an active part in freedom struggle.

She was good at sports. She took part in congress flag satyagraha's and Marches, she was arrested and imprisoned several times along with Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya, Sarojini Naidu and others in 1930s and 1940s.

#### **12. T.B. Jayalakshmi Bai (1912)**

She was a native of Harihar Taluk. She was married to T.B. Kesava Rao a freedom fighter and social worker of Bellary. They adopted a harijan boy. In 1930s she took part in non-co-operation movement and was imprisoned at Vellore. In 1942 also she was arrested along with her husband.

#### **13. Subbamma Jois (1919-82)**

She was a freedom fighter from Sirsi Siddhapur who took part in salt satyagraha. Forest Satyagraha and no tax campaign. She was close associate of Bellary Siddamma, Umabai Kundapur and others. She also looks at Shivapur (1938) and underwent imprisonment for a short time.

#### **14. Krishna Bai Punjekar (1906-59)**

She was a native of Honnavar. Her husband Gulvadi died very early. She lived at Dharwad and took active part in salt satyagraha and congress flag satyagraha's.

Other prominent women listed above also took a leading part in the freedom struggle in various capacities during the civil disobedience movement, Khadi Movement, quit India movement, Harijan Upliftment. She lived a life of glorious sacrifice for the liberation and unification of the country.

#### **Conclusion:**

In Karnataka Nationalist awakening was slow to take an explicit character because of the rule of Maharaja in one hand and imperative control of British on the other. The move towards unification integrated itself with Nationalist movement because of the measured activities of these committed leaders who successfully ignited the consciousness of people to unite together and fight for united India.

These individuals are important due to various actions first they fought for independence for their countries. Freedom fighters sacrificed their lives for the good and freedom of their countries.

It is because of freedom fighters that numerous countries enjoy Independence today. To this end some of them laid their lives down for their countries. The freedom fighter utilized their popularity and convictions to spread awareness and speak against various ills. Freedom fighters' contribution is long-lasting and inspirational to the present and future generations.

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