
Women's Participation in Freedom Movement in Princely Mysore with Special Reference to Gandhian Ideologists Sonia M.V.

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines women's participation in the freedom movement in Princely Mysore, with a special focus on the influence of Gandhian ideology. While the Mysore state, ruled by the Wodeyars, was considered "Modern Mysore" with administrative progress, it also faced suppression of aspirations for Responsible Government. The national movement, spearheaded by organizations like the Mysore State Congress (established 1938), drew significant involvement from women, many encouraged by their families.

Women like Subbamma Jois, Yashodhara Dasappa, Caveramma, and Chennamma were prominent. Their activities included Khadi production and promotion (e.g., at the Badnaval center), picketing liquor shops, and civil disobedience, leading to arrests and imprisonment. These actions demonstrated a strong nationalistic urge and a commitment to Gandhian principles of simplicity and self-sacrifice, ultimately contributing to the state's merger with independent India.

KEYWORDS:

Princely Mysore, Women, Freedom Movement, Gandhian Ideology, Responsible Government.

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Introduction:

1920 onwards Indian freedom movement became a national movement, spreading to all corners of the subcontinent and all sections of the Indian society. The main idea caught the attention of common people especially women was the simplicity of the measures to follow, sincerity of the leaders who called large sections of people to call for participation in their struggle to liberate their motherland from the foreign yoke. It was that easy. Because the British who were ruling Indian subcontinent with a stern hand, were well adaptive in the measures of good management as well as in suppression of public opinion which was against to them. As a

Kannada song describes it as ‘a cloth spread on a thorny bush to be removed carefully without damaging the texture of the cloth. It needed help from all parts, all sections, and all classes of the peoples. It was a delicate work indeed

Freeing a country as big as this subcontinent, with multitude speaking different language from region to region, resources spread over scarcely in few parts and scattered its riches in other parts. But the ingenuity of the people of this ancient land made them hardworking, realistic, creative, and were ready for sacrifices for the wellbeing of the greater number. The land and its people had firm foundation of culture and religious thinking though it varied from region to region. But the idea of oneness was intact for thousands of years.

People of Princely Mysore were no different. Mysore state had its glorious socio-cultural inheritance from time to time. For few reasons it had special significance in British Empire. Its recent past of a tough struggle over the mastership of the region was still fresh in the memories. The four Anglo Mysore wars between the English and Haidr Ali and his son Tipu Sultan from 1756–1800 was still the talk of the town, these of several stories, lavis (folk songs in memory of great heroes were in circulation among the people who were unread but good composers, writers, singers. Tipu called himself ‘Tiger of Mysore’ was the only formidable enemy the English struggled to keep themselves the land. Bitterness of the British towards Tipu Sultan and the tough battles they fought in between vouches the seriousness both of them taken towards each other.

Fall of Mysore in 1799 at Srirangapatna Tipu's kingdom was dismembered; Wodeyar's the erstwhile ruler got just 1/4 of the kingdom after signing Subsidiary Alliance treaty. Thus started the developments related to princely Mysore.

The rulers of Mysore were had some contradictions in their administrative policies. Too lenient towards few sections of the society, encouraged orthodox principles, neglect of major portion of the people, neglect of their women a hurdle in their claim to Modernity. Female Education was neglected till 1890, Evil practice of Infant marriage was rampant among higher castes, though banned in 1894, still it was prevalent, and child widows were large in number even in 1911. Widow marriages neglected among higher castes. Only one part of the society was patronized

by rulers, though it took ugly incidents of Madrasi Brahmin over-Mysore Brahmin.

Princely state of Mysore ruled by Wodeyar dynasty was not purely an independent entity. It was a state under Subsidiary Alliance treaty signed in 1800 after the death of Tipu Sultan. Even then the state was not free from political upheavals. The Nagar insurrection of 1829-30 proved the administrative mismanagement and over-taxation by state officers. The rebellion was ended by British army re-entering the state and suppressing the rebellion. Then they brought the states under their direct rule, for five decades through their commissioners. The Commissioner rule laid the foundation of good administrative machinery in Mysore. By the end of direct rule, the state had certain positive growth. The Christian Missionaries, The London Missionaries and, the Wesleyan Missionaries had established schools where they admitted children of all irrespective of caste or status, they introduced printing machines, translated several old Sanskrit classics, B. L. Rice had unearthed thousands of old inscriptions. Thus, after Rendition in 1881 the state was at the threshold of modernity and the state was addressed as 'Modern Mysore'

In spite of it the state had established a Representative Assembly in 1881 by Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar and his able Dewan Rangacharlu, which gradually grew in stature later in 1907 the Second House 'Mysore Legislative Council was established. Thus, giving wider platform for discussion. Non-Brahmin movement or Backward Class movement started since 1905 through establishment of caste Associations like Lingayat Education Fund 1905, Vokkaligara Sangha in 1906, Kurubara Sangha in 1901, Muslims were also organized by 1907. Thus, within a decade 40 percent of non-Brahmins except the poorest section the Dalits were organized.

These two developments: State's initiative for progress and awareness among people taking place simultaneously brought modernity into Mysore. But how can they escape national awakening? Mysoreans though were in better situation as part of Princely establishment, were keen observers of ongoing national awakening. Few Enthusiasts like M.N. Jois, Sardar Venkatramayya, Hosakoppa Krishnarao were eager to join the national struggle. But the rulers of Mysore who wished to be in good relationship with their political master the British did not encourage, later started repressing people's aspirations to have Responsible government as

British Indians had. Even the establishment of Mysore District Committee in 1920 was opposed. Establishment of Mysore State Congress in 1938 at Shivapura was peaceful bringing fresh air to the people's movement. Women leaders like Caveramma, Yashodhara Dasappa, Subbamma Jois, Chennamma had organized volunteer organization to serve in that Its session of Mysore Congress

But unfurling of Congress Flag at Vidhurashwata witnessed in 1938, led to firing, death of few volunteers created ugly scene and spoiled the cordial relationship between The Maharaja's government and his people. Congress Historian Sri Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who documented the growth of National Congress brings out vividly how Mysore government was more oppressive than British provinces" 'But the State that figured largely in the public eyes and suffered largely in public estimate was Mysore...' Independence Day' and in regard to what was called compendiously though mystifyingly, subversive activities, demand for securities from individuals, restraint orders were the order of the day' 2

From then onwards women freedom fighters joined Congress activities in Mysore. Many of them were encouraged by their family members. But were Eady to face any eventuality. Here Ima focusing few incidents related to women freedom fighters in princely Mysore. How though they were from traditional families, were bold enough to participate, in the movement, break the laws, faced imprisonment. Most of them involved in Khadi Prachara, Sale of Khadi, picketing liquor shops, burning foreign goods etc.

First woman volunteer from Mysore to go to prison was Subbamma Jois, wife of M.N. Jois. When her husband was imprisoned and Congress has issued a call for Poorna Swaraj in 1920's She single handedly with the help of a male servant took a Bamboo stick and hoisted Congress flag in an open ground near her house in 1921-22. For which she was arrested and police took away her Mangal sutra, for which she again underwent hunger strike, later was released 3.

It is an irony how this well administered state, which looked into the needs the people, had its share of freedom movement. The thesis is going to cover the factors responsible for the freedom movement along with the movement for Responsible government by the people of the state. At the outset it is the desire of the people of Mysore who were affected

by ongoing National movement and wish to be part of that movement. It is true that the state of Mysore was under the control of Maharaja who had genuine concern towards the needs of the people, but changing times brought realization among educated people to have a responsible people's government and wish to be part of a democratic set up. Thus, we have three decades of a movement that ended in Mysore state merging with Independent Indian democratic set up. Here one can clearly observe the nationalistic urge among people, Influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, we come across a large number of women educated, working women, house wives, intellectuals, ordinary women, even poor, vegetable sellers, agriculturists, laborers, cooli women supported national movement.

As for field work I visited Badnaval Khadi Production centre⁴ at Badanval in Nanjangud Taluk. It was established by Tagadur Ramchandra Rao Gandhian and prominent Freedom fighter of Mysore region. It was his initiative of spreading Khadi production which was one of the main constructive program. Specialty of this center is that here from cotton to thread, -thread to cloth were spun and were ready for sale.

Another significance is whole production is done manually. No use of electricity at any level of production. Even today people prefer using Khadi cloth as bedsheets, towels, sarees, and hand towels.

Tagadur Ramchandra Rao established one khadi production at his native place Tagadur and another at Badanval which I visited for my study. These two centers were visited by Mahatma Gandhiji during his tour of the state⁶.

These two centers were patronized by Gandhians for a long time. Princely Mysore ruled by Wodeyar's for four hundred plus years was also contributors in their own way. It had contributed to the National Congress, supported its Khadi prachar and also Mahatma Gandhiji was the state guest when he was sick. Maharajah Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV patronized these centers ordered government offices to buy Khadi cloth for their usages. These centers provide employment to hundreds of poor women of surrounding villages and help them to be self-sustaining. Today though neglected due to rapidly changing political conditions, the State government (presently ruled by Congress government) continuing its patronization. Khadi goods were bought and sold through Handloom sectors of state and central governments.

On my second visit to the Centre 15-8-2025 spoke to few women workers in Badanval Khadi center: They say that this unit helps them to earn money for their livelihood. As they are in a remote village and rural area away from job opportunities, but for this work they live comfortably by earning little money. They have ailing parents, in-laws, little children to care they cannot travel to towns for job. As they work in this center, close to their village they are able to self-sufficient

I interviewed the family member of the prominent Gandharans and Freedom Fighters from Mysore state My visit to the House of Saroja Tulasida daughter in law of H.C. Dasappa and Yashodhrara Dasappa on 17th-8 25.7. These couple was an epitome of simplicity and strictly adhered top Gandhian principles. H.C. Dasappa and Yashodhara Dasappa. Saroja Tulasidas or Sarojamma as she as we call her a well-known name in the field of Gandhians as she is continuing the work of her mother-in-law Yashodhara Dasappa and managing Kasturba Ashram at Arsikere which was founded by Yashodharama, and continuing social and political activists.

Sarojamma Tulasidas whom I interviewed, is the wife of late Tulasidappa who was a Member of Parliament and son of H.C. Dasappa and Yashodhara Dasappa. It is curious to know how dedicated these couples towards Gandhian principles in their life and followed them strictly. During the marriage of Saroja with Tulasidas son of then central Railway Minister and Yashodhara a Minister in Mysore state the bride was offered only four Khadi sarees as their gift. Sarojamma fondly remembers those sarees as her precious gift during my interview with Saroja Tulasidas. This was the best example of a true Gandhians. Today Sarojamma spends her time in arranging lectures on Gandhian principles, and political awareness through the 'Dasappa Institute of Public Affairs' in Mysore.

Sarojamma has fond memories of her mother-in-law Yashodhara. Though she was a minister of Mysore state used to consult local people, tried to bring changes in her department. She was the first to make an experimenting that Sarvajanic hostels to have children of all castes, just to eliminate caste distinction. It was a bold experiment.

The list is long. Fortunately for Mysoreans, they have several well-known, lesser known women who selflessly participated in freedom struggle and contributed in several ways, like Congress propaganda, Khadi

Prachara, spreading the message of Mahatama Gandhiji, and involved in removal of several loopholes in Princely administration. Their selfless sacrifices brought fair name to Mysore Kingdom which could be called Modern Mysore in all respect.

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The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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