Modern History · GS - I

Discuss the role of women in the freedom struggle especially during the Gandhian phase.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - I	Modern History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Mass mobilisation; Gandhian movements; women leaders; civil disobedience; revolutionary participation; social transformation

Model Answer

Introduction

Women played an increasingly prominent role in India's freedom struggle, particularly under Mahatma Gandhi, who encouraged their participation in mass politics and civil disobedience.

Role during the Gandhian Phase

1. Non-Cooperation Movement

Women participated in boycotts of foreign goods, promoted khadi and mobilised communities. Basanti Devi and other women activists helped popularise nationalist activities.

2. Civil Disobedience Movement

- Women joined the Salt Satyagraha and broke colonial salt laws.
- Sarojini Naidu led the protest at the Dharasana Salt Works after Gandhi's arrest.
- Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay encouraged women to participate in the salt movement and boycott foreign goods.

3. Quit India Movement

- Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the Congress flag at Gowalia Tank in Bombay in August 1942.
- Usha Mehta operated a clandestine Congress Radio.
- Sucheta Kripalani contributed to underground nationalist activities.

4. Constructive Work

Women promoted khadi, village industries, education, sanitation and social reform. Kasturba Gandhi became an important figure in the constructive programme.

5. Participation beyond Gandhian Organisations

Women such as Captain Lakshmi Sahgal joined the Indian National Army, while revolutionary activists such as Kalpana Datta participated in militant resistance.

Significance and Limitations

Women's participation widened the social base of nationalism and challenged gender stereotypes. However, leadership remained disproportionately male, and social inequalities continued to restrict many women's opportunities.

Conclusion

Women transformed the freedom struggle into a broader mass movement and laid foundations for greater political participation and gender equality in independent India.

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