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Q4

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

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · GS I · 12 marks · The Freedom Struggle

The Freedom Struggle - its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the role of women in the freedom struggle especially during the Gandhian phase
- Cover earlier precedents, Non-Cooperation to Quit India, and limits of that participation
- Keep the explanation within a 12.5-mark length

Revision summary

1857 and Swadeshi already had women leaders, but **Gandhi** scaled participation through khadi, boycott, and salt.

Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi, and Kasturba stand for a much larger picketing public in the 1930s.

Quit India produced **Aruna Asaf Ali**, **Usha Mehta**, and **Matangini Hazra** when the male centre was arrested.

Peasant and town women both entered the campaigns.

Leadership titles still lagged behind this mass role.

Flow diagram

Gandhian satyagraha -> Khadi picket salt

Gandhian satyagraha -> Quit India underground

Khadi picket salt -> Mass women in streets jails

Quit India underground -> Mass women in streets jails

Male high command -> Limits on office

Conclusion

- Give named leaders and unnamed mass work in the same answer, and keep the stress on the Gandhian campaigns as asked.
- Do not collapse the INA's Rani of Jhansi Regiment into this question except as a later, non-Gandhian contrast if space remains.

In the Gandhian phase women moved from exceptional heroines to a mass of satyagrahis who spun, picketed salt and cloth, and led when men were in jail. That widened the nation, even though formal power inside the Congress still lagged behind their sacrifice.

Facts & figures

Dharasana, 1930

Salt raid where Sarojini Naidu led volunteers after other leaders were taken, a symbol of women's front-line satyagraha.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Socialist-Congress worker who joined salt satyagraha and argued for women's economic and political place in the nation.

Aruna Asaf Ali

Socialist who became a public face of underground Quit India after August 1942.

Usha Mehta

Organiser of the Congress radio that broadcast Quit India messages from hiding in Bombay.

Matangini Hazra

Elderly Congress worker killed in 1942 in Midnapore while leading a procession, remembered as a peasant-nationalist martyr.

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