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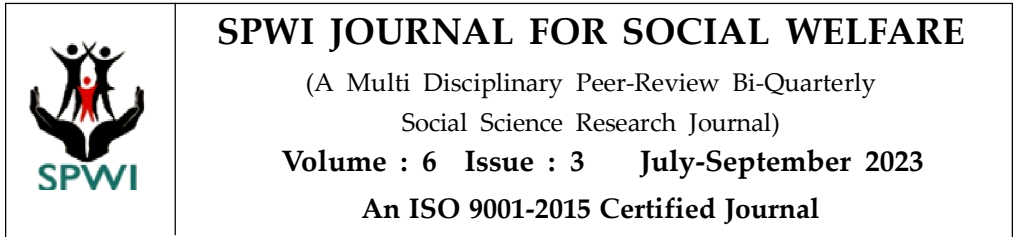
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### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PEASANTS' ARMED STRUGGLE IN TELANGANA STATE - A STUDY



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**Abstract:** *This paper mainly concentrates on Women's Participation in the Telangana Armed Struggle. The 1940's marked a new phase in the politics of Hyderabad state. The struggle, issues raised and the ideology that supported this all heralded a new and radical phase. Moving from demands for freedom of social expression and organization, which were essentially concerns of the urban middle class of Hyderabad, the focus now was on the forms of oppression, the feudal nature of the state and the compulsions necessitating a shift of activity from the Urban and Semi-Urban areas to the rural villages. These trends necessarily affected women's organizations, compelling hard choices. While most of the women leaders and organizations, given their class character, opted out of this radical phase, a few Hyderabad organizations like the Navjivan Mandali made conscious decisions to support the Communists. By the end of the 1940s women's participation in the urban and the rural areas was legitimized by the spaces created for them or the opportunities they created for themselves. Two divergent and seemingly parallel trends emerged, a legitimate public space for participation for the urban middle-class educated women, a process that was supportive and facilitated by society.*

**Keywords:** *Women Participation, Telangana Armed Struggle.*

#### Introduction

The Telangana Armed Struggle occupies a unique place, not only in the history of India but also in the history of the people's Liberation struggle of the World. During the Second half of 18 Century, the Th Bourgeoisie (middle class) industrial workers and peasants fought a liberation struggle throughout Europe against Monarchism and Feudal

Disport under the slogans of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". Women's Participation in Telangana Armed Struggle The 1940s marked a new phase in the politics of Hyderabad state. The struggle, issues raised and the ideology that supported this all heralded a new and radical phase. Moving from demands for freedom of social expression and organization, which were essentially concerns of the Urban middle class of Hyderabad, the focus now was on the forms of oppression, the feudal nature of the state and the compulsions necessitating a shift of activity from the Urban and Semiurban areas to the rural villages. These trends necessarily affected women's organizations, compelling hard choices. While most of the women leaders and organizations, given their class character, opted out of this radical phase, a few Hyderabad organizations like the Navjivan Mandali made conscious decisions to support the Communists. By the end of the 1940s women's participation in the urban and the rural areas was legitimized by the spaces created for them or the opportunities they created for themselves.

### **Women Participated in the Telangana Armed Struggle**

In Subaramigudem, Golla Muttayya was killed for not surrendering the piece of land he was cultivating, but his wife stepped in and continued the cultivation and did not allow the enemy to seize the land. In Moddulukunta, a lambadi took possession of a piece of land from landlord Ramakrishnanna who tried to seize it with the help of the police. The lambadi was beaten to a pulp and forced to leave his house and farm. But his wife refused and persisted. She cultivated it and succeeded in carrying the harvest to her home. Veeraram, a lambadi peasant and his wife resisted their land being sized by the landlord's men and the police. The police trampled on the women who were pregnant and she died.

It was a fact that tens of thousands of women stood along with their men folk in this struggle for land. A great percentage of agricultural labourers are women. They are in very large numbers, perhaps as many as the men themselves, because they too must earn if they are to get even one meal for their children and themselves. They cannot rely on their men's earnings. As such it is not surprising that women participated in large numbers in all agricultural labour strikes or seizure of grain from landlord's and 7 Deshmukh's ware houses and Gadis. In the Kondrapalli centre, and other neighbouring centres in many villages, agricultural labourers went on strike for an increase of their daily wages to four seers from the then-existing 2 or 3 seers. In the ages of demonstrations, women in large numbers participated with their hands. Ultimately to force the landlords to come to a settlement, they had to raid and start seizing grain. The landlords were forced to concede the demands. Some women stayed in their villages, defended their homes, fought against the oppressors and the police and suffered. Many demanded to be taken into the immensely, but went on guerrilla squads, to the forest area, maybe partly under the pressure of the enemy attacks as the only method of escape. The party admitted only a few women into the forest areas and even fewer in the guerrilla squads. Yet there were several women in various jobs in both the forest

and plain regions. In the political and militant. The village women folk aided the guerrilla squads in their raids. They provided the squad members with water and food while the battles raged for hours together. Women went in disguise to gather information about the military camps and passed it on to the squads.

During the Nizam days in 1946-47, the Nizam police and levy raided the villages of Akunur and Machireddypalli in Jangoan taluk. They raped a dozen or more women. This incident was taken up even by Congress leaders as a major issue, as an insult to the honour of women folk and as a disgrace to national honour. Padmaja Naidu was at the forefront of that agitation and a huge wave of anger swept the whole country. In Ragipadu (Suryapet taluk) a woman who had delivered only three days before, was raped. In Narigudem (Bhuvanagiri taluk) a woman who had delivered a day before, was raped. In Tanguenta, a woman in advanced pregnancy was raped. In Yenapadu, of Bhuvanagiri taluk, and Pushpapur of Khammam taluk even girls of 10 years were raped. Reports of women being raped by 5-10 military policemen at a time were innumerable. More than 100 women died of brutal raping. In the first year itself, reports showed more than a thousand women being raped. It will be no exaggeration to say that in all these three years of the police and military terror regime, a few thousand women were raped. But the women and the people waged a continuous and bitter struggle against this barbarous attack on women, beat back the police in many cases, and saved them from this torture.

In Madarugudem, Miryalagudem taluka, the wife of the local organizer, Balakoti was caught hold of by the military. She resisted and fought back, and escaped from their clutches. In Jalalpuram an armyman tried to rape a pregnant woman. She talked to him to get him into the room and then bolted it from the outside and gathered a crowd of women. When the armed police were attacking the villages of Balemula, Pata Surya pet, Mallareddygudem, Devarapalle and in some other places, women were at the side of their men, handing them stones for their slings. Along with their men folk they faced brutal lathi charges and gets, a woman who was supplying stones in the Mallareddygudem standing by the side of her husband, shot dead. Women resisted their men's folk being spirited away in Lorries and demanded that they should accompany them and face all the consequences. The police gutting women in the Lorries could move only when they took them along with their men folk. In the Kottagudem Koyahamlet, in the Gundala area, in September 1950 the men and women of the whole village resisted the military atrocities killed a subedar and three of his men and seized their arms and in guns. After this when the military came in large force the whole village had to take shelter in the deep forest.

That was the heroic way the women lived through the ordeal, not even allowing their children to go out, which will always rouse admiration and be an example of the determination and stubbornness of which women are capable. In Rajaram centre, a man and woman of a lambadat and a were taken to the camp, the police suspecting

them of helping the guerillas. They were made to stand up for days and nights without food and water. When they fell, a little water was given and as soon as they became conscious were again made to stand up. Their legs became swollen, but even after this torture both would have rather given up their lives than give any information about the guerrillas. The enemy then let them off. gutting area that women took It was a common feature in the whole extraordinary precautions to look after the guerillas and squads, sheltering and billeting them in their houses and many cases keeping night or day vigil while the guerillas or leaders were sleeping or resting.

The women fed guerillas and party organizers at anytime of the night or day with great care and affection. They took food and supplies to the guerilla hideouts in the forests on hills and suffered horrible tortures and indignities when they were found out. In the village of Bendalapadu, a peasant woman Rajamma was caught. She and her husband were tortured with red hot irons, and her waist and hands were branded as if wearing ornaments but not a single word she uttered about the squads. The charge was that she was taking food to the squads in the forests. In this struggle, women had participated equally along with the men and due to this it became easier for the gram committees, Sangham and party to campaign against the age-old ideas prevalent in the society that women were inferior to men. Women were elected to village Pancha committees. As mentioned earlier the Urban Women's Organizations in Hyderabad split on the issue of support to the growing radical movement. Smt. Sita Kumari was very interested in politics. She pioneered the ideas that she propagated and, in the process, she became a member of the Legislative Assembly.

The organized Satyagraha movement launched by the States Peoples, Conference in 1938 was only the beginning of the people's struggle. It was at such time that the Communist party called upon the All-India Trade Union Congress, the All-Hyderabad Students Union and the women whowere organized in a few towns, to join hands with the Andhra Mahasabha and to comeout boldly and protect the life of the people. Men and women prepared themselves to face the Nizam. Women played an important role in the Telangana Armed Struggle. They who had suffered and starved under the regime of extortions of the Nizam and the Deshmukhs now saw the possibility of a new life, and they actively participated in the land movement, in the seizure of the landlords' grain, and in the struggle for higher wages. They fought the Razakars and the Nizam's police and later the Indian Army, standing shoulder to shoulder with their men. Ordinary women in the villages heroically defended their 13 lands. It is a well-known fact that tens of thousands of women stood along with their men in this struggle for land, women formed a large percentage of the participants in the agricultural labour wages in hand came in strikes. In demonstrations, the women with red chilli participated in seizing the grain of large numbers and landlords who were then forced to concede their demands of four 'seers' of grain as daily wages, raising it from the prevailing rate of two or three 'seers'. Even though the women had hitherto not been drawn politically into the movement or politically trained, they can during the now

rise to great heights of heroism and sacrifice right in their villages and their homes, but struggle. Not only did they get in the many demanded to be taken in the guerrilla squads and forests. The leaders admitted only a very few women into the forest area and fewer in the guerrilla squads.

Mallu Swarajyam who was active even as a young girl in the Andhra Mahasabha, later joined the Communist movement and organized men and women to participate in the Telangana struggle. In Rajaram centre, a man and woman of a lambadat and a were taken to the camp, the police suspecting them of helping the guerillas. They were made to stand up for days and nights without food and water. When they fell, a little water was given and as soon as they became conscious were again made to stand up. Their legs became swollen, but even after this torture both would have rather given up their lives than give any information about the guerrillas. The enemy then let them off. gutting area that women took It was a common feature in the whole extraordinary precautions to look after the guerillas and squads, sheltering and billeting them in their houses and many cases keeping night or day vigil while the guerillas or leaders were sleeping or resting.

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Among the most active was a young village girl from Marathwada, named Padma Deshpande. She played an important role in organizing the activities, going from the school cannot role Sarojini and taking the message of the demonstration to the female students. Another individual who played a sign Dhool pet, was a hard working and devoted worker. She was not only at the fore front of the struggle for the introduction of food rationing but also took the responsibility of writing and distributing the ration cards, working day and night through the Mahila Navjivan Mandali. She earned great popularity and she used all her organizational talents to rouse women against the activities and the injustice of the Razakars. She gathered around her a good number of sympathizers who were a big asset to the anti-razakar movement.

In this great struggle, women showed their courage and fortitude and, in the process, liberated themselves from the feudal chains that had bound them down for centuries. But the reason so many women participated in leading the struggle was due to the good work done among women and by the women cadres. From the beginning of the forties, a mass organization of women was built. 16 Pramela Mahendra one of the active comrades in Hyderabad, says that the general atmosphere helped the Communist program. Their programmes were for the entire women folk irrespective of caste and creed. There was no friction among members.

## Conclusion

The women's organizations became a big mass movement involving the building of and countryside. The movement that questioned the very basis of society was founded on exploitation, inequality, and indignity. It demanded a socio-economic



transformation of society. Communist women gave a new turn to the women's movement. Most of the organizations of women comprised of the middle and upper middle and their membership was limited in numbers. How Communists worked and the way Navjivan Mandali became popular did bring credit to its members. It helped the Communist Party time peasants, and workers to gain popularity in the city. For the downtrodden in urban areas, the agricultural women, and lower-middle-class women.

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