

Aruna Asaf Ali

April 5, 2021

Aruna Asaf Ali (1909 – 1996)

- She was an active participant in the Indian independence movement, widely remembered for hoisting the Indian National flag at the Gowalia Tank maidan, Bombay during a Quit India Movement in 1942.
- She is known as the 'Grand Old Lady of Indian Independence' for her role in the freedom struggle.

Aruna Asaf Ali and National Movement Struggle

- Aruna Ali completed her education at the All Saints College in Nainital. During her youth, she came under the influence of the congress socialists and became a radical nationalist.
- Aruna Asaf Ali took part in many non-violent agitations during the Salt Satyagraha. For this, she was promptly arrested by the colonial authorities.
- The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was made in 1931 which promised the release of all those arrested during the Salt Satyagraha, but Aruna Asaf Ali was not among them. Only a strong protest by other women freedom fighters and Mahatma Gandhi helped in securing her release.
- Upon release, she was not politically active but at the end of 1942, she became an active member of the underground movement.
- She was arrested in the course of the individual Satyagraha in 1941.
- She participated in the Quit India movement (1942-46) from underground.

Her Contribution to the Quit India Movement

- The Quit India resolution was passed by the Indian National Congress on August 8, 1942. In response, the

colonial government arrested major leaders of the movement.

- Despite major leaders and many workers of the party being in jail, Aruna Asaf Ali led the remainder of the party and unfurled the Congress flag at Gowalia Tank Maidan, marking the beginning of the Quit India Movement.
- The police fired upon the crowd but Aruna stood her ground in the face of danger.
- An arrest warrant was issued in her name but she managed to evade arrest. She edited the magazine Inquilab, a magazine of the Congress party.
- She continued to encourage the youth to fight for independence not through passive activism but through active revolution. The British announced a reward of Rs.5000 for her capture.

Post Independence work

- Aruna Asaf Ali was a member of the Congress Socialist Party, factions within the Congress Party for activists that had socialist-leaning. She left the Congress Socialist Party to join the Communist Party of India (CPI).
- After India's independence she became associated with the left socialist group, which in 1955 merged with the Communist Party of India.
- She was a leading member of the Indo-Soviet cultural society, All India Peace Council and National Federation of Indian women
- Aruna Asaf Ali played a crucial role in the formation of the National Federation of Indian Women in 1954. This was the women's wing of the CPI.
- In 1958, Aruna Asaf Ali became the first mayor of Delhi
- For her role in the Indian independence struggle, she was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1992 and the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1997.

- In her honour, the Dr Aruna Asaf Ali Sadbhawan Award is conferred annually by the All India Minorities Front.
- Aruna Asaf Ali passed away in New Delhi on 29 1996, July at age 87.