

Women freedom fighters

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In news– In his ninth Independence Day address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to women freedom fighters for showing the world the true meaning of India's "nari shakti".

History of Women freedom fighters-

Following are some of the women freedom fighters who played significant role in India's freedom struggle-

Rani Laxmibai-

- The **queen of the princely state of Jhansi, Rani Laxmibai** is known for her role in the First War of India's Independence in 1857.
- **Born Manikarnika Tambe in 1835, she married the king of Jhansi- Maharaja Gangadhar Rao Newalka.**
- The couple **adopted a son (Damodar Ra)** before the king's death, which the British East India Company refused to accept as the legal heir and decided to annex Jhansi.
- Refusing to cede her territory, the queen decided to rule on behalf of the heir, and later joined the uprising against the British in 1857.
- Cornered by the British, she escaped from Jhansi fort. She was wounded in **combat near Gwalior's Phool Bagh**, where she later died.
- **Sir Hugh Rose, who was commanding the British army**, is known to have described her as "personable, clever...and one of the most dangerous Indian leaders".

Jhalkari Bai-

- A **soldier in Rani Laxmibai's women's army, Durga Dal**, she rose to become one of the queen's most trusted advisers.

- She is known for putting her own life at risk to keep the queen out of harm's way.
- Till date, the story of her valour is recalled by the people of Bundelkhand, and **she is often presented as a representative of Bundeli identity.**
- According to Ministry of Culture **many Dalit communities of the region look up to her as an incarnation of God** and also celebrate Jhalkaribai Jayanti every year in her honour.

Durga Bhabhi-

- Durgawati Devi, who was **popularly known as Durga Bhabhi**, was a revolutionary who joined the armed struggle against colonial rule.
- A **member of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha**, she **helped Bhagat Singh escape in disguise from Lahore** after the 1928 killing of British police officer John P Saunders.
- **During the train journey that followed, Durgawati and Bhagat Singh posed as a couple**, and Rajguru as their servant.
- Later, as revenge for the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, she made an **unsuccessful attempt to kill the former Punjab Governor, Lord Hailey.**
- **Born in Allahabad in 1907 and married to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) member Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Durgawati**, along with other revolutionaries, also **ran a bomb factory in Delhi.**

Rani Gaidinliu-

- **Born in 1915 in present-day Manipur**, Rani Gaidinliu was **a Naga spiritual and political leader** who fought the British.
- She **joined the Heraka religious movement** which later became a movement to drive out the British.
- She rebelled against the Empire, and refused to pay taxes, asking people to do the same. The British

launched a manhunt, but she evaded arrest, moving from village to village.

- Gaidinliu was finally arrested in 1932 when she was just 16, and later sentenced for life.
- She was released in 1947. **Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, described Gaidinliu as the “daughter of the hills”, and gave her the title of ‘Rani’ for her courage.**

Rani Chennamma-

- The queen of Kittur, Rani Chennamma, **was among the first rulers to lead an armed rebellion against British rule.** Kittur was a princely state in present-day Karnataka.
- She fought back against the attempt to control her dominion in 1824 after the death of her young son.
- She had lost **her husband, Raja Mallasarja, in 1816.**
- She **defeated the British in her first revolt,** but was captured and imprisoned during the second assault by the East India Company.

Begum Hazrat Mahal-

- After **her husband, Nawab of Awadh Wajid Ali Shah, was exiled after the 1857 revolt,** Begum Hazrat Mahal, along with her supporters, took on the British and wrested **control of Lucknow.**
- She was forced into a retreat after the colonial rulers recaptured the area.

Velu Nachiyar-

- Many years before the revolt of 1857, Velu Nachiyar waged a war against the British and emerged victorious.
- **Born in Ramanathapuram in 1780, she was married to the king of Sivagangai.**
- After her husband was killed in battle with the East India Company, she entered the conflict, and won with

support of neighbouring kings.

- **She went on to produce the first human bomb as well as establish the first army of trained women soldiers in the late 1700s.**
- **Her army commander Kuyili** is believed to have set herself ablaze and walked into a British ammunition dump.
- She was succeeded by her daughter in 1790, and died a few years later in 1796.

Basanti Devi-

- Basanti Devi joined the freedom struggle after her husband Chittaranjan Das was arrested. She was a **participant in the Khilafat movement and the Civil Disobedience movement.**
- She was **one of the founding members of the Nari Karma Mandira**, which was aimed at educating women.
- She went to prison for a short time for selling khadi in Kolkata (then Calcutta).
- She also ran the **weekly publication of Bangalar Katha** and headed the Bengal Provincial Congress as its president, She received the Padma Vibhushan Award in 1973.

Dr Laxmi Sehgal-

- Dr Laxmi Sehgal, also known as **Capt Laxmi Sehgal**, was more than a freedom fighter as her efforts pushed against casteism in India.
- She **trained as a medical student at the Madras Medical College and did her MBBS in 1938. She was drawn to the freedom movement by Subhas Chandra Bose's call for action.**
- She **helped build and command the first all-women regiment of Netaji's Indian National Army**, earning the title of Captain Laxmi Sehgal.

Sarojini Naidu –

- Also known as The **Nightingale of India**, Sarojini Naidu was an activist, poet and politician.
- She was the **first woman governor of an Indian state** after independence and also the **second president (1st Indian Woman) of the Indian National Congress.**

Umabai Kundapur-

- Umabai Kundapur is often considered an unsung hero of the freedom struggle. **She was the founder of Bhagini Mandal.**
- In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi appointed her as the **agent for the Karnataka branch of the Kasturba Trust.**

Tara Rani-

- Tara Rani and **her husband Phulendu Babu joined Gandhiji's Quit India movement in 1942.**
- They organised protests and **planned to hoist the Indian flag at the roof of the Siwan Police Station in Bihar.**
- As they led a crowd towards the Siwan Police Station, raising the 'Inquilab' slogan, the police opened fire on them.
- Phulendu was hit and Tara bandaged him with part of her sari. She then continued to lead the march towards the station holding the Indian flag.
- When Tara came back, her husband was dead. She continued to play an active role in the freedom struggle.

Matangini Hazra-

- Matangini Hazra, also **known as Gandhi Buri, was an integral part of the Quit India and Non-Cooperation movements.**
- She was shot thrice when police fired at a procession she was leading. She died with 'Vande Mataram' on her lips.

- A statue was put up in Kolkata (then Calcutta) to commemorate her.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay-

- She was a **social reformer and a distinguished theatre actor** who played a very important role in India's fight for freedom.
- She also **participated in the Satyagraha of 1930**. She played an important **role in creating the All-India Women's Conference**.

Uda Devi-

- She was **among the first freedom fighters who revolted against the British regime** in the Indian Revolt of 1857.
- It is said that Uma Devi climbed a tree during the revolt and shot 30-36 British soldiers.

Aruna Asif Ali-

- Popularly known as **'The Grand Old Lady'** of the independence struggle, Aruna Asif Ali was an activist and a freedom fighter.
- She is best **known for hoisting the Indian National Congress flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Mumbai** (then Bombay) **during the Quit India movement**.
- She also **took part in the Salt March** and other protest marches for which she was imprisoned.

Bhikaji Cama-

- Bhikaji Cama was the **first person to hoist the Indian flag on foreign soil, in Germany**.
- She met Dadabhai Naoroji while she was residing in London and joined the Indian National Congress.
- She **helped publish and smuggle the newspaper, Bande Mataram**, to India and was sent to jail for three years during the First World War.
- In 1935, she came back to India but died within a year

of her return.