
THE PARTICIPATION OF TAMIL NADU WOMEN IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN STRUGGLE - A STUDY

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Introduction

In India's early history, most women kept themselves out of politics. However, some have left their mark on warfare, diplomacy and administration. However, the medieval period produced some exceptional female administrators and leaders. Under British rule, most women participated in the freedom movement against British rule in Tamil Nadu. Women play an important role in Indian politics. Apart from Indian women, European women also entered Indian politics, founded organizations and volunteered. Thus, the enormous work of the women's movement greatly awakened the women of Tamil Nadu who then helped India gain independence.

Women's Participation in Tamil Nadu

In the mid-19th century, white settlers in South Africa petitioned the Indian government for permission to import Indian labor to develop plantations of sugar, coffee and cotton in Natal. For example, workers from Tamil Nadu are recruited under five-year contracts with the promise of security and land at the end of their term. In November 1860, the first Indian workers and craftsmen arrived in Durban.¹ Tamilnadu workers have worked very hard to build the economy of Natal and the coastal area has become one of the most prosperous regions in South Africa. Not only did they work on the plantations, but they also helped develop railroads and coal mines, and some of them moved to the Transvaal. After the contract ended, some of the workers began commercial horticulture, producing a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Indian workers were followed by Indian businessmen and accountants, mainly from Gujarat.²

In 1880, white settlers saw the Indians as formidable competitors in agriculture and commerce. So they started harassing, humiliating and deporting the Indians. Mahatma Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893 and soon became involved in helping Indians defend their rights and honor. Numerous appeals and petitions, delegations to local authorities and the Imperial Government in London failed to prevent the harassment and betrayal of pledges. In 1906, the provincial government of the Transvaal issued an Indian Registration Ordinance, imposing humiliating restrictions on them. Knowing this, Gandhi decided he had no choice but to flout the law. He helped organize Indians in campaigns of civil disobedience for their rights and the honor of India.³

Gandhi led a regiment during the Boer War. Three hundred free Indians volunteered, along with eight hundred laborers fired by their masters. They worked for days under enemy fire, bringing wounded soldiers back to the hospital. The Indians sometimes traveled twenty-five miles a day. It impressed people from England and from South Africa. Gandhiji and several other comrades received war medals.⁴ He believed that Indian bravery in war would arouse a sense of fair play in South Africa and help moderate white hostility; in 1904, 1905, and 1906 the Asiatic Department of the Transvaal government endeavored to enforce all anti-Indian regulations and showed a particular attitude in the making of new regulations. They were criticized by Gandhi's writings in Indian Opinion. By early 1904, the vast majority of Indian members of the Transvaal metropolitan community had to leave their homes. They take their bed and go to a place of complete isolation where their existence risks being forgotten and life then becomes difficult and unprofitable.⁵

After returning from the Boer War, Gandhiji read the chapters of the Transvaal Government Regulations one by one and saw in them the do's and don'ts apart from hating the Indians. In his opinion, if the law were passed and the Indians obediently accepted it, it would mean absolute ruin for the Indians of South Africa.

He saw clearly that it was a matter of life and death for them. He further saw that even if briefs and appeals are unsuccessful, society should not sit idly by. Better to die than succumb to such a fate. But how could they die? What should they risk? The only choices before them are victory or death.⁶

This regulation requires that every Indian man, woman or child be registered in the Asian Register and obtain a certificate of registration. Failure to apply would constitute a crime and violators could be fined, imprisoned or even deported. This proof must be presented in the presence of any police officer. Failure to produce evidence is an offense and offenders can be fined or jailed. Even people who walk on public roads must show identification. The police can enter private homes to check the certificates. The Indians branded him as the "Negro Bill". When the Negro Act came into effect, nonviolent resisters decided to call Indian mass meetings. On July 1, 1907, volunteers arrived and saw the permit office open. The community openly decides to fight every office, sending volunteers on the road who will warn weak-kneed Indians not to set a trap for them, even an Indian who thinks the "Negro Act" must be obeyed. to their credit for the case.⁷

With the exception of a few Indians who obtained permits under the Act, the majority did not. As a result, many Indians received formal notices to register or leave the Transvaal. Unable to do so, they were brought before magistrates on January 11, 1908, and Gandhiji was one of them. They were sentenced to 3 months of imprisonment and forced labor with a heavy fine, and as compensation they were to receive another 3 months of forced labor. Gandhiji was sentenced to two months in simple prison. On March 14, 1913, Judge Searle of the Cape High Court delivered his judgment announcing in South Africa all marriages performed under Hindu, Muslim and Zoroastrian law. As a result, many married Indian women were no longer the wives of their husbands, they were relegated to concubines.⁸

Faced with such insults towards Indian women, it is unbearable. Gandhiji decided to

invite women to ally with men. He decided not to broach the subject with his wife Kasturba. But she overhears the conversation and decides to join the fight herself. Their influence spread like wildfire. The brave Transvaal sisters have been imprisoned for three months. News of the strike and arrests spread quickly and thousands of workers unexpectedly and spontaneously expressed their support. The Union government has no right to imprison thousands of innocent people. The Governor General of India will not tolerate this and the whole world is waiting to see what General Smuts will do. Shortly after submitting the committee's report, the government published the Indian Relief Act in the official Federal Gazette. Part of it confirmed marriages performed legally in India and South Africa. The second part removes the £3 annual license fee.⁹

The most famous figure who helped Gandhi organize the civil resistance movement was his loyal and courageous colleague G.K. Thambi Naidu. When the civil resistance movement officially started in July 1907, Thambi Naidu was the main proposal after protests from the registry office. He was the first to be arrested. On December 28, 1907, he was charged with Gandhi for refusing to register and was ordered to leave the Transvaal on January 10, 1908. But he was imprisoned with Gandhi for disobeying the order. When Gandhiji invited women to join the nonviolent resistance movement in 1913, Thambi Naidu's wife, Virramal, was the first to volunteer, despite her advanced pregnancy.¹⁰

Let us recall in this context that Miss Moonsamy, who was not yet pregnant at the time, was in her twenties. Valliamah, eldest daughter of R. Moonsamy Moodliar of Johannesburg, 22 years old in St. Johannesburg after a long illness. It seems that she was taken to bed immediately after her sentencing and also suffered terribly after her release. The late Valliamah was born in Johannesburg in 1898 and attended public school. She joined the passive resistance struggle on October 29 last year and traveled to Newcastle with a group of women.¹¹ She then provided assistance to Charlestown, Dundee, Ladysmith and Dannhauser, Maritzburg, Tongaart and Durban. She finally crossed the Transvaal border on 22 December 1913 and was sentenced, along with her mother and others, to three months hard labor at Volkstrust and released on the 11th by provincial agreement. His father was one of the first Indian settlers in the Transvaal. Once imprisoned as a passive resistance fighter, he fell very ill during the last campaign and was taken to hospital, where he recently underwent surgery.¹²

They share their parents' grief and express their deepest sympathy for their irreparable loss. A few days after this conversation, Valliamma was no longer with us, but she left us an immortal name. Condolence meetings were held all over the country, and the Indians decided to erect the "VALLIAMMA HALL" to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of this Indian girl. However, as long as India exists, the name of Waliama will remain in the history of South Africa. A few years later, at a congratulatory meeting in Madras honoring him and his wife, Gandhi said: "If one tenth of the language used in this speech is won by us, you represent your fellow sufferers in South Africa, what language is suggested for those who lost their lives and therefore did their job?¹³ What words are you going to put in Nagappan, Narayanaswamy, boys who are 17 or 18 years old, who have faced all the trials, all the tribulations and all for their country with pure faith? What language would you

suggest to describe Valliamma, a charming 16-year-old girl who was released skinny from a prison in Maritzburg and died about a month later with a fever? You say I inspire great men and women, but I cannot accept that statement. They are them, these simple people who work hard with faith and never expect anything in return, they inspire me on the right level and force me to do the work that I can do thanks to their trust in the great God they you deserve The crown that wants to impose on us. These young men deserve all the adjectives you kindly but blindly throw at us.¹⁴

Conclusion

Thus, the entry of women into the national movement in the nineteenth century entered a new phase in the history of Indian national movements. She paved the way. Massive entry of women during subsequent South African struggle actions. participation in the struggle for freedom must also Judging from its long-term impact i.e. empowerment of women in all spheres of life, socio-political and economic, India has made very significant progress in the area of women's empowerment since independence.

End Notes:

1. Rajan Mohan, *Women in Indian National Congress*, Delhi, 1999, pp.28-29.
2. Nawaz B. Mody, *Women in India's Freedom Struggle*, Mumbai, 2000, p.304.
3. Champa Limaya, *Women: Power and Progress*, Delhi, (nd.), pp.63-64.
4. Ibid.
5. Mahatma Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Madurai, 2008, pp.409-410.
6. The Indian Patriot, Madras, 28.09.1909.
7. Champa Limaya, *op.cit.*, p.65.
8. E.M.S.Namboodiripad, *A History of Freedom Struggle Social Scientist Press*, Trivandrum, India 1986, p.207.
9. NNPR, September to December, 1909, pp.755-756.
10. James D. Hunt, *Gandhi and the Nonconformists Encounters in South Africa*, New Delhi, 1986, p.108.
11. N.E. Ramalingam, *Indiya Viduthalai Sirppikal* (Tamil), Adampakkam, Chennai, 1996, p.387
12. The Indian Opinion, 25.02.1914.
13. Shriman Narayan (ed.), *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi [Satyagraha in South Africa]*, Vol.III, Ahmedabad, India, 1968, p.388.
14. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol.I, Bombay, 1953, pp.200-201.