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SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS
Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress
Journal of the South Indian History Congress since 1981
ISSN No.: 2229-3671
UGC CARE Listed Journal

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Source: Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress 35(2015), pp.

Stable URL: http://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/journals/articles/2015/SIHC_2015_V35_035.pdf

Published By: South Indian History Congress

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ROLE OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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The role of "Indian women" in the freedom movement has been well documented. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, a number of women joined the struggle. Most of them were from the upper and middle-class Hindu families. While Muslim women too joined the independence struggle, their number was less compared to Hindu women, SamitaSen explains the reason.

"He (Mahatma Gandhi) invoked India's sacred legends— all Hindu— to appeal to women. Icons like Sita, Savitri, and Damayanti resonated with Hindu women, even the most poor, low caste, and uneducated, because for them these were living legends. But they excluded Muslim women, who were uncomfortable with such invocations."

The list of Muslim women who participated in the freedom struggle is impressive and not restricted to one type of activity. They encouraged their husbands, fathers and sons at home and themselves took all the household responsibilities on their shoulders in the absence of their men folk. They came out of their four walls and travelled from place to place to encourage people to strive for independence. They joined non-violent as well as violent movements against the foreign rule.

The Muslim women who took part in the struggle against the British played an important role in the freedom movement. To quote from an article by Dr.Darakhshan Anjum, "When Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi proclaimed jihad against the British and in response to this call Ulema and other people from all over the country joined him and obstructed the smooth sailing of the British, ladies were also not far behind." The teaching of Jihad took a concrete shape in 1857 and continued till India achieved freedom in 1947. Not only Muslim men but Muslim women also stood up against the British. These women were not only from educated and enlightened families but also from illiterate and rural areas. .