



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 15, Issue, 05, pp.24700-24702, May, 2023
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.45285.05.2023>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

PIONEER WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN INDIA

*Ms. Kumerjit Chajgotra

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication and New Media Central University of Jammu

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th February, 2023
Received in revised form
24th March, 2023
Accepted 29th April, 2023
Published online 30th May, 2023

Key words:

Women, Freedom Fighters,
Women Journalist, Radio, Media,
Independence. India

*Corresponding Author:
Ms. Kumerjit Chajgotra

Copyright©2023, Kumerjit Chajgotra. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Ms. Kumerjit Chajgotra. 2023. "Pioneer Women Journalists in India". *International Journal of Current Research*, 15, (05), 24700-24702.

ABSTRACT

The revolutionary idea of independence influenced women and men of our country equally. The idea of independence from Britisher was communicated to masses across country through different means of communication as speeches, vernacular newspapers, posters, photographs, rallies, meetings etc. Underground radio or congress radio is one of the medium used and which became a part of Indian freedom struggle history. Usha Mehta was the women freedom fighter, one of the core members of Underground radio which was part of the quit India movement in 1942. Present study is an historical account of role Usha Mehta played during the Quit Indian Movement, her moment of reckoning came in 1942 during the Quit India Movement when she rose to occasion, unfurled the National Flag in Bombay to signify the commencement of the Quit India Movement. The researcher has adopted Secondary data for the present study. To understand role of Usha Mehta and Homai Vyarawalla India's photojournalist contribution in raising awareness about freedom struggles, during struggle for independence, Communicating the news among workers, students to unite the countrymen, clicking the photographs to capture crucial moments. The present study is based on freedom fighter Usha Mehta and Homai Vyarawalla their role, through the use of media in India.

INTRODUCTION

This is the Congress radio, calling on 42.34 metres from somewhere in India." This announcement was made by Dr. Usha Mehata. India achieved Independence on August 15, 1947 because of sathyagrahas, sacrifices, a century of revolutions, struggle, blood shedding by freedom fighters, Women freedom fighters bravely faced the authorities, police and went behind the iron bars. Hundreds and thousands of Indian women dedicated their lives for obtaining freedom of their motherland. Brave daughters, courageous women who fought and contributed enormously to the success of our freedom struggle. History of women in freedom struggle: Woman's participation in India's freedom struggle began as early as in 1817. Bhima Bay Holkar, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi whose heroism and leadership laid on outstanding example of real patriotism. Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijay Lakshmi pundit, Annie Besant etc. in the 20th century are the names which are remembered even today for their contribution in battlefield and in political field. In The Quit India resolution as it was launched in the speech women were declared "as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom". As Bryce beautifully observes, "From time to time hope is revived by the appearance of a group of disinterested re-formers, whose zeal arouses a nation to sweep away abuses and leaves things better than it found them"¹

Media: Media in different forms united Indian population in the struggle of Indian independence to share information, united people by making them aware and voice their decent against atrocities of

British government. As media is termed as extension of man by marshal Macluhan in his book "Understanding media: the extension of man" similarly media practitioners extends the cause of man as well. The first printed newspaper in India, the Bengal Gazette. Run by James Augustus Hicky ridiculed British rule. Samachar Sudhavarashan, Doorbeen and Sultan-ul-Akhbar, which were suppressed for their critical view of the Raj. English government organized the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, pointed smothering non-English papers from reprimanding the english rule. Revealing and reporting is an enamoring calling. A have picked News a role as an energy to focus in on clever uncovering, covering essential Basic human right infringement, and a few social causes. For News coverage reporters put their lives in extreme danger by placing themselves in various situation like conflict, and catastrophic events like flood, blasts and struggle. Some cover the entertainment, sports or business. Journalism is considered as a male dominated profession and subsequently ladies who embrace this occupation experience enormous reactions and marginalization in general public. A significant number of the young female countenances began progressive composition for pamphlets during the opportunity development. Homai Vyarawalla was India's most memorable ladies photograph columnist. It is the fantasy of numerous ladies to construct a brilliant profession in this field. Still in one Harvard business review report discusses the underrepresentation of women in media, as In a 2015 report, women made up a mere 19% of experts featured in news stories. one can see a very sharp 'U' curve. This tells that it's the poorest and the richest women only work.

¹ Modem Democracies ,Vol.I, pg 56

Press Laws: In pre-independence, the government formulated several legal actions, including Gagging Act, comprised a set of rules for publishing, distributing and circulating news stories and operating media organizations working independently or running in the subcontinent. The British policy towards the emerging press of the late 19th century included official harassment, ruinous litigation and deportation of editors. Throughout the 19th century the British alternated between two models of press regulation. It originated in Lord Hasting's. Regulation of 1818. The second approach consisted of a comprehensive licensing system. This applied from 1823-35 and 1857-63. Variations of this approach included the introduction of a forfeiture deposit system, whereby the paper made a financial deposit, which would be forfeited if it transgressed the law. This method operated between 1878-82. Press objectionable matter act 1931². Media in different forms contributed in the fight for freedom struggle. Amidst this Ushamehta became a voice of the people. Usha Mehta contributed to the quit India movement in 1942, through the use of radio as a medium to reach masses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted Secondary data for the present study. Sources of secondary data include books, personal sources, journals, newspapers, web sites, government records etc.

Objective of the study is to understand the Indian women journalist, freedom fighter Usha Mehta and Homai Vyrawalla India's photojournalist.

Usha Mehta: Indian women freedom fighter and her contribution: Usha Mehta was born in Saras Village in Gujarat on 25 March 1920. She participated in her first protest against Simon commission 1928. Her father was a lawyer. After her father retirement they shifted to Mumbai, where She became even more actively involved 1932 by distributing bulletins, publications and carrying messages to jailed leaders. In 1939 she graduated from Wilson College in Bombay but her study in law came to an end when she would join the quit India movement in 1942. Sacrificed her studies she could have become a lawyer like her father but sacrificed her life for the freedom of India.

The Quit India movement was announced by the Indian National Congress to commence on 9 August 1942. The British authorities arrested all the leaders including Mahatma Gandhi in order to derail the movement, but junior leaders Aruna Asaf ali still went ahead with the event, hoisting the national flag at Gowalia Tank ground and thus starting the Quit India movement. The wrath of government fell on railway, telegraphs, telephones, police stations, post offices, and other government buildings.

Congress radio/ Underground Radio and Usha Mehta: Rammanoharlohia requested Vithal Madhavjikhakar to initiate in organising broadcasting system and fund it as well. VM Khakar approached Nariman Abrabad printer who was quite well trained in wireless and radio engineering to construct congress radio transmitting set. Radio was set up on 26th august 1942 at top floor flat of sea view hired for broadcasting. Madhav Limaye called it Azad radio. Note she got from Ram Manohar Lohia he said "I don't know you personally, I admire courage and enthusiasm to contribute your mike to sacrificial fire lit by MK Gandhi, I request you to come and meet me at the earliest at your convenience". Meeting took place 17-09-1942, and they all consented to work together as team. This is congress radio calling 42. 3 meter somewhere from India. Long cherished dream not only radio name a transmitter recording station and call sign and distinct wavelength of own. To relay news release, speeches, instructions. When all news banned transmitter helped good deal with spreading the message of rebellions to the remotest corner of the country. She mentioned in her interview to Cambridge

university on 30th october 1969. With power full transmitters they felt that they can reach foreign countries. Originally broadcast once a day then twice morning and evening. New items were got from all India news by special messenger and office of Indian congress committee use to supply important news they broadcast in English and Hindustani News item was daily feature. Programm use to start with "Hindustan Hamra" and ended with "VandeMatram". They use to appeals to different section, students, lawyers, women, workers, and explain our policy explaining previous struggles, and quit India movement. News gathered by newspapers was not allowed to be published before they are censored by censor office. They transmitted uncensored news of mass rape of women by soldiers.

Congress Radio played a key role in the independence struggle by spreading uncensored news and other information banned by the colonial authorities. Usha Mehta narrated the humiliation of women on October 7, 1942. As number of women were in Surat while a procession. They were molested in the van and later on dragged out. From Repeating important speeches through microphone. When 2nd world war it spread message of internationalism, brotherhood and freedom. On October 19th October 1942. They transmitted about secularism, and tried to bring Hindu muslim unity. Mentioned how Indian who are unarmed and weak offering brave opposition to britishers, those who love freedom are include Hindu, MuhamedanParsis and Christians. They mentioned that how lakhs of Muhamedan fought for the freedom of this country shoulder to shoulder for freedom. Mainly the radio operated from Bombay and Nashik. They use to shift locations until it was detected by police on November 12 1942. Police raided radio shops. Technicians were arrested, she was arrested when she was in the office, they tried to remove important files related to congress radio successfully and then reached at recording station where Dr.Lohiya and Harris were busy she told that our colleagues are under arrest. They created another transmitter overnight program as usual went live. After vandematram, they heard a knock at door from police and Usha Mehta was arrested with Dr.Lohia and Harris, at the post of their duty. They didn't ran away as expected by the police. They were taken to the lockup. Police seized the congress radio November 12 1942. After prolonged investigation for 2 months charge sheet was filed, and five accused Babu Bhai, Adhavchakkar, vithalbhaijhaveri, chandrakantjhaveri, Nankmotwani and UshaMehta one women in four men. Charged with encouraging and inciting public generally to refuse and defer payment of land revenue and taxes payable to the government, sentence came in May. Usha Mehta got four years rigorous imprisonment.

Usha Mehta mentioned in her interview with Cambridge University how they faced the Problem with finance. She mentioned how along with her team members, they all worked and pulled resources, approached technician friend who use to teach radio mechanics. She also mentioned how the detectives used to chase them in. On have to shift from place to place for three months. They use to move transmission setup. They made few more sets for transmission so that if one of the radio ceases the other one can be operational. Ingenious device to separate recording and transmission stations. During her trial, she chose to remain silent and did not answer any questions put forward by the prosecution even to the ones that would have saved her. She was sentenced to four year imprisonment at Yervada Jail in Pune. She was released in 1946.

HOMAI VYARAWALLA

Homai Vyrawalla born on 9 December 1913 in Gujarat. Her family had a place with India's minuscule however powerful Parsi people group. She spent a lot of her young life progressing in light of the fact that her dad was an entertainer in a voyaging theatre bunch. She moved to Mumbai, then, at that point, Bombay, to seek after a confirmation at St Xavier's school, after which she joined the J J Schools of Arts, where she got a camera and started to concentrate on photography. Vyrawalla, was famously known as 'Dalda 13.'. She began her career in 1938 working for the Bombay Chronicle she captured probably the most powerful Indian politicians, including,

Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Indira Gandhi. she met Manekshaw Vyarawalla, a freelance photographer, who she would later marry. It was he who introduced her to photography. She grabbed the opportunity which aligned with her interest area of photography. Aside from these, she likewise shot the absolute most famous photos during WWII and the vast majority of her photos, were distributed under the nom de plume "Dalda13". In addition to the fact that she India's originally was female photojournalist however she reported the defeat of British rule in India. she had moved to Delhi and 30 years worked as term professional in photojournalism. Her actual presence, that of a lady in a sari dealing with a Rolleiflex, perplexed her counterparts and drove large numbers of them to excuse her as a beginner. This excusal appears to have accompanied a few advantages, nonetheless, as it conceded her unhindered admittance to her subjects. As no one viewed her in a serious way, she was basically overlooked and ready to travel every which way as and where she pleased. Her photographs were at first distributed under her husbands name and afterward under a nom de plume she invented for herself, 'Dalda 13'.

She was the known lady photojournalist in India during her time and her endurance in a male-overwhelmed field is even more huge in light of the fact that the calling keeps on barring most ladies even today. Incidentally, Western photojournalists who visited India, for example, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Margaret Bourke-White stand out than their Indian peers. In a generally undetectable history, Homai Vyarawalla's presence as a lady should be considerably more valuable for future generation of women journalists. Carrying camera and clicking pictures was indeed a matter of courage when women were still in shackles of gender inequality. The world had changed and she played had a huge impact in rousing and recording this change. She took her most iconic pictures, in any case, after India became free - from the flight of the English from India, to the memorial services of Mahatma Gandhi and previous state head Jawaharlal Nehru. Ms Vyarawalla additionally captured most conspicuous freedom pioneers. She was awarded India's second highest civilian honor, the Padma Vibhushan, in 2011. She died on 16 January 2012 at the age of 92.

Media to reach the Indian masses: Through different mediums of communication as newspapers pamphlets, struggle for independence reached the masses of India. Usha Mehta contributed as a core member of underground radio. As Gandhi jis newspaper harijan, Young India. Mehta and her colleagues broke the news of a Japanese air raid on a British armoury at Chittagong, a port city that is now part of Bangladesh. In one of her research paper "Sarvodya and Democracy" in Indian journal of political science 1958. She, quotes how democracy need mediation to aware population about the elections, votes and democracy". Mehta later joined the movement, distributing bulletins and selling salt in small packets as part of Gandhi's "salt march" to protest a colonial law allowing the government to regulate and monopolize salt Women not only participated in political means to disseminate the message of freedom, but through, media as well. She took part in arranging finance for the radio, helped in building the mobile transmission setups, writing programs, hosting programs. Conveying camera and clicking pictures was to be sure a question of boldness when ladies were still in shackles of orientation imbalance. The world had changed and she played had a tremendous effect in energizing and recording this change. A camerawomen Homai Vyarawalla's presence as a lady should be considerably more valuable for future generation of women journalists

CONCLUSION

Our freedom fighter has already set an example that women can and have been contributing in the media from technically setting up a broadcasting setup to writing programs, relay of news and information. She said in her interview that how when she came back from jail as happy and to an extent, a proud person, as she held the satisfaction of carrying out babu's message do or die and of having contributed her humble mike to the cause of freedom.

Being daughter of this land she contributed through media. today when it is claimed that women want rights without responsibilities Usha Mehta proved women in media not only contribute they take the consequences too equally, unfortunately not remembered too often. She passed away on 11 August 2000, aged 80 dedicated all her youth her life for realisation of a dream of independent India. She authored many articles, essays and books in English and Gujarati, worked as political science professor in university of Bombay. She was conferred the Padma-Vibhushan in 1998, the second-highest civilian award of India. Unsung story of Usha Mehta as per her contribution in freedom struggle and media. Homai varraivalli her contribution as a cameraperson set an example for women photojournalist to work towards their dreams. Some incidents of shows how we have moved ahead from times when women need to hide their names to be published or their work to be accepted. It is time women become part of journalism to voice the voiceless.

REFERENCES

- A small introduction to India's first 4 women Journalists – She The People TV. (2015, March 26). She The People TV. <https://www.shethepeople.tv/news/a-small-introduction-to-indias-first-4-women-journalists/>
- Abdul, G. (2021, May 13). Overlooked No More: Usha Mehta, Freedom Fighter Against British Rule in India. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/13/obituaries/usha-mehta-overlooked.html>
- BBC News. (2017, December 30). Homai Vyarawalla: The trailblazer who became India's first woman photojournalist. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-42349710>
- Desk, D. W. (2020, August 15). How the Press participated in India's freedom struggle. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/how-the-press-participated-in-indias-freedom-struggle-873361.html>
- Heath, D. (2022). Book review: Devika Sethi, War over Words: Censorship in India, 1930–1960. Indian Economic and Social History Review, 59(1), 119–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00194646211066022>
- Interview: Dr Usha Mehta. (n.d.). The Centre of South Asian Studies. <https://www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk/archive/audio/item/interview-dr-usha-mehta/>
- Prasad, P., & Prasad, P. (2020, December 9). Iconic Images By India's 1st Female Photographer, Homai Vyarawalla. The Quint. <https://www.thequint.com/photos/iconic-images-homai-vyarawalla-india-first-woman-photojournalist>
- Rattan, A. (2019, July 8). Tackling the Underrepresentation of Women in Media. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/06/tackling-the-underrepresentation-of-women-in-media>
- Tnn. (2019, August 15). A radio station that covered the freedom struggle. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/a-radio-station-that-covered-the-freedom-struggle/articleshow/70683630.cms>
- Venkatraman, V. (2018). Women in National Politics and Freedom Struggle. Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3132149>