

Odyssey of Childhood from the Pages of August Kranti

A Narrative of Students' Participation

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ABSTRACT

The freedom struggle of India had many phases and personalities, both known and lesser known, who contributed in making the movement memorable for all time. In the Quit India Movement, popularly known as the August Kranti, the students and children played a significant role. The government records, private paper, oral accounts and newspaper clippings mention their engagement with different phases of the movements. However, the spaces allocated to them are often minuscule. The names of some of the children who laid down their lives are sometimes referred to, but very often the finer details of their roles are often glossed over. Nevertheless, the manner of their participation did capture the attention of authorities, and thus, the names of the few who became the legend makers for all time are mentioned. In this paper, an attempt has been made to weave the role of the students in varying age groups and to discuss the nature of their involvement in different provinces.

Keywords: August Kranti, Swaraj

Introduction

The August Kranti (Quit India Movement) was a people's movement. It saw the engagement of persons from all walks of life who participated willingly throughout the journey of its occurrences. The significance of the movement lay in the involvement of students and children in different capacities. The nature of their involvement can be classified into two broad categories. Firstly, they became

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part of the localised movements, and secondly, as the movement spread to other regions, they also became part of the larger canvas of the national struggle.

Objectives

The main objectives are to:

- Discuss the manner in which students of varying age groups participated in different provinces.
- Analyse primary sources to know the manner of participation.
- Interview some of the people who were part of the struggle.
- Identify measures that were taken to repress the movement.

Methodology

The paper is based on extensive consultation of archival materials, particularly with regard to primary sources. It is also based on interviews of survivors who helped in getting the first-hand account of the movement as it spread to different parts of the country. The relevant secondary sources have also been consulted. Some of the newspapers mentioning the Quit India Movement have also been referred to, for weaving the picture of this important historic episode.

It is interesting to note that several primary and secondary sources, and oral accounts highlight that the association of children and youth was fanned by the feeling of patriotism and commitment to the cause of *swaraj* (self-rule). The nature of their involvement was a mix of non-violent as well as violent means. Many of them participated by giving food and shelter to the freedom fighters, sang patriotic songs, contributed to the variety of literary works and participated in spinning khadi. The popular compositions that helped in mobilising the masses, have become timeless and continue to be recited, using different means of communications in occasions like the observation of the Annual Day in schools. The common compositions that are prominently referred to are—*Jhanda Uncha Rahe Hamara, Vijayi Vishwa Tiranga Pyara, Iski Shaan Na Jane Paye, Chahe Jan Bhale Hi Jaye*. The others that gained popularity within and outside the country is the National Anthem and the National Song. The other popular slogans raised by the students along with the freedom fighters were—*Angrez Bhag Gaya* (the white colonisers should run away), *Station Phoonk Do* (burn the station), *Thana Jalao* (burn the jail), and *Bharat Mata ki Jai* (Hail to Motherland Bharat).

It is significant to note that the motivation of the students and the children was conditioned by a strong passion for patriotism. It was overtly visible when some of them, belonging to different age groups, took part in destroying the symbols of power and authority, such as the post office, the telegraph lines, the railway station, and so on. This phenomenon symbolised a strong urge on the part of the children and the freedom fighters for gaining independence from the colonial yoke. Nothing but complete *swaraj* was envisioned. In this very context, bonfires of foreign cloth were lit, and shops selling goods and liquor were picketed. Many times, those in their impressionable years were motivated by the freedom fighters of their regions, their family members and the peers of their age group. Thus, the students' and the children's contributions showed that our struggle for independence was free from barriers of caste, gender, age and region. Moving further, the messages of Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose are mentioned. Both the leaders had faith in the power of the youth of the country, particularly with regard to changing the wheels of fortune of the country and in the attainment of *swaraj*.

The Message of Mahatma Gandhi

“Students have asked me what they should do; I would expect them individually to take pledge for it, means their determination to win independence for India through trustworthy and non-violent means. Symbolising in their constructive programme in which the charkha (the spinning wheel) is the central activity, other items are harmony among different communities and eradication of untouchability these do not constitute a struggle but their fulfilment is indispensable for it. If the struggle comes, students will not strike. They would leave their school and colleges for good but students will not strike on 25. It will be good if authority themselves as they might close their institution, and lead their staff and students in processions, and other items of the programme...”

Source: Hallett Collections, IOR, MSS, EUR - 251/29 Microfilms, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

The Message of Subhash Chandra Bose

“Women and especially girl students should come forward to act as secret messengers and underground workers, and provide shelter for men who fight... Students should leave their studies and organise guerrilla bands for carrying on sabotage. They should

everyday invent new ways of annoying the British authorities and Odyssey of Childhood from the Pages of August Kranti ...”

Source: Government of India, S.C. Bose, Group IV, No. 15-69, classified files, National Archives of India, New Delhi

These messages perhaps acted as a source of motivation in mobilising the students. However, the manner of participation of the students and children, in different age groups including the adults, in most of the cases was spontaneous. The participants were not scared about the consequences, which could even cost their precious lives. Severe repressions did not affect their courage, confidence and commitment. Many of the youth in their prime and in the transient phase of development were severely punished, beaten, molested, imprisoned and their families were reduced to poverty. The timeline of participation of the students and the children from some of the provinces is stated below.

In the United Provinces (presently, Uttar Pradesh), the districts that were most affected during the August Kranti were Ballia, Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Basti, Mirzapore (Mirzapur), Faizabad, Sultanpur, Banaras (Varanasi), Jaunpur and Gorakhpur. In the then United Province, in some of the districts, the students of the Allahabad University played a proactive role. In this city, presently known as Prayagraj, the students organised strikes, which led to the closure of schools and colleges. The students also took out large processions in different parts of the city. Strikes were also organised to protest against the arrest of leaders like Gandhi ji. They were organised from 10 to 12 August 1942. The processions were led by both the boys and girls. In some of the processions, the girl students were put in the forefront to make the task of the police difficult. Further, to provoke the students into violent acts, the police threw brickbats at the crowd. Fortunately, no one was hurt in this incident. Additionally, the police resorted to *lathi-charge* (blows received from sticks), severely injuring many students including girls. Firing was also resorted to by the authorities. One of the students, Lal Padamdhari Singh, was killed. Another student, Ramesh Malviya, who was managing the crowd could not run for his life. He too died. A similar fate was met by Dashrath Lal Jaiswal. He had put on the Gandhian cap, the soldiers asked him to take off the cap, on refusing the order, he was shot dead. Inside the university premise, the students including the girls protested. In the month of November 1942, some girls were trying to offer *puja* (prayer) for their departed colleagues, but this act was prevented by force. The letter of Tej Bahadur Sapru to Mr Jayakar; both lawyers by

profession, also indicates that the passion of students was aroused when stations like Cawnpore (now, Kanpur) were raided and shops were looted. The students also resorted to stone-pelting on vehicles, such as cars to show their protest. The saga of the movement is also stated in some of the oral accounts of persons, who were involved in this movement in different capacities:

Highlights of an oral account from an interview conducted with one of the survivors of the Quit India Movement

A telephonic interview was conducted with Mrs Ansuya Vermah, wife of late Shree Jagdish Chandra Vermah, she mentioned that her husband was the son of Shree S.P. Vermah, the then Registrar of the Allahabad University. She stated that at the time when the movement had spread to many places in the present state of Uttar Pradesh, her husband along with other students of the university took part in shouting the anti-British slogans. At the time of the participation, her husband was seventeen years old and he was pursuing Bachelor's degree in Science. The then Superintendent of Police, prepared a roster of students who participated, for putting them behind the bars. He took the list to the then Registrar and stated that he wished to arrest them, and take strict disciplinary action. On seeing the list, the Registrar found the name of his son and other students mentioned in the submitted paper. He, then, made a request to the police person to pardon them all and personally took the responsibility for their conduct by giving an undertaking with regard to their behaviour.

Interview conducted by Author on 6 March 2019.

Moving on with regard to several other happenings particularly in the city of Lucknow, the students organised anti-British movements that were marked by demonstrations and protests. There was a serious clash between the students and the police. The school girls also joined the procession. In the October 1942, the girls were stopped by the police. The girls showed their fearlessness by snatching the *pagree* (turban) of policeperson and throwing their *chappals* (slippers) on them. Even though the school gave an undertaking of containing all forms of violence, the girls went ahead and burned the turbans fearlessly.

Such an incident was also witnessed in the district of Ghazipur. The students of the City High School took part in all the activities that were led by the freedom fighters. This included being part of the *prabhat pheris* (morning processions), removing fish plates

from the railway track and looting the shops selling food items. Some of the students helped in opening the jail and letting the prisoners go free. They also participated in picketing shops selling foreign items. In a communication from Maurice Garnier Hallett to the then Governor of United Province, dated 18 April 1942, there was a mention that the disturbances in Ghazipur district can be compared to Chauri Chaura incident that occurred in 1922 and was termed as the second Chauri Chaura incident.

Highlights of an oral account from an interview conducted with another survivor of this historic movement

An interview was conducted with Shri Rajkumar Srivastava, who is presently, 94 years old and is living in New Delhi. He recalled, fondly about his participation in the Quit India Movement. He mentioned very briefly on the backdrop of the movement, e.g., the failure of the Cripps Mission and the AICC meeting that was held at the Gowalia Tank, Bombay on 8 August 1942, that ratified the Quit India Resolution. He recalled that he had heard about Gandhi ji's, slogan 'Do or Die' that was popular in his neighbourhood. He further recalled that many freedom fighters moved in processions and shouted slogans like—*Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Hind Hamara Azad Rahe* (Let India, Hind remain free), *Maa Beheno ki Laaj Rahe* (Let the honour of our mothers and sisters be preserved), *Jhanda Uncha Rahe Hamara* (Let the flag of our country fly high), *Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai, Vande Matram* and many more were common among all people irrespective of their background.

At the time of the occurrence of the Quit India Movement, he was 12 years of age. He remembers that when he went to the school, he could see people standing in groups at different open spaces, which included the streets, the market places and the playgrounds, discussing the events in a subtle manner that followed from 8 August 1942 onwards. The men and women in their private spaces were engaged in evolving strategies that they would follow or adopt during the succeeding days following 8 and 9 August 1942. Continuing with the narrative, he added that, as usual, the plan of the day was adhered by him. After taking his breakfast, he went to the school. He was surprised to see something unusual, like people taking out processions, shopkeepers closing their shops and the students boycotting classes. Seeing this scenario, he got motivated to join the protest. He decided to participate without his parent's knowledge. He added that he evolved a secret plan.

The operational part was to maintain complete secrecy of his method of involvement; he would go to the school, mark his attendance and then slyly participated in the activities of the freedom fighters. This included, being part of the processions which was taken out in the city and assisting them in all their activities that he could manage. His teachers were aware of his activities, they used to help him by marking his presence. He was surprised and also moved to know that they did not report the matter to his parents. He stated that it was probably because they understood his commitment and passion that they could see along with the freedom fighters. Maybe, he guessed, it could be due to his performance in all the subjects, which was more than satisfactory. It could also be, his attitude towards his teachers which was very respectful. Nostalgically continuing with his narrative of participation, he gave a graphic account of some of the sabotage activities that he was involved with, e.g., cutting of the telephone wires, telegraph lines, uprooting the electricity poles in the surrounding areas of Ghazipur. Discussing further, he recalled few activities that he contributed to, i.e., facilitating people in paralysing the communication channels of the then local government. He recalled, few other activities where his engagement was minuscule, i.e., in damaging the railway station and in the destructions of records. He also took part in destroying, the berths of the train and in the removal of the railway tracks that was some time uprooted. The railway godowns were also looted and plundered, and finally the government buildings, the *patwari*'s office (local revenue official) and the courts were attacked. Further, he joined the processions of the freedom fighters to open the gates of city *kotwali* (police station) and the gates of the district jail in Ghazipur. He stated that the activities of the freedom fighters, including the students and the children were meticulously reported to Mr Munro the then District Collector. He added that Mr Munro visited his school, in the presence of the Superintendent of Police. At that point of time, many of his seniors including him watched the Collector with awe and fear. But to his surprise, Mr Munro took a lenient stand and did not listen to the Superintendent who was trying to instigate him to open fire on some of the identified suspicious students. Thus, Mr Munro gave signal to the Superintendent to be soft with them and thereby, a blood bath that could have occurred was prevented.

Interview conducted by Author on 6 March 2019.

Navigating further in landscaping the contours of the movement, the city of Banaras (presently Varanasi) did not remain calm or a mute spectator to the ongoing happenings that took place during this period. In this city, turbulence was witnessed at the Banaras Hindu University, where the students had organised their own guards and police. For five days, the students of the university led the masses and were able to paralyse the administration. On 14 August 1942, the students of the university declared themselves as Free India. The National flag was hoisted on the civil and criminal courts in the presence of the police. It was the firing from the police personnel's that actually instigated the students becoming violent; they retaliated by attacking the government building and the means of communication. Also, nearly all the station on the Eastern Indian Railway (EIR) was looted and burnt. The broad gauge line on the EIR from Banaras to Lakhnau (now Lucknow) was completely blocked. The aerodromes at Rajwari and Ibbatpur were damaged. Women also suffered heavy losses in terms of losing their dear ones, and their movable and immovable properties. Many women of different age groups were physically molested. About nine students were expelled from the university. Further adding to this episode is another oral account from the field.

Highlights of an oral account from an interview conducted with Radhika Devi

An interview with Radhika Devi, who is the wife of the late Pandit Mahanand Mishra, a popular participant in the Quit India Movement was conducted. She stated that she supported her husband in all the activities he was engaged with, during the spread of a movement in the Eastern United Province. At the time of the interview, she was more than 80 years old and was residing in Ballia. During interactions, she mentioned that she did not play an active role as some of the women from this region did. Going back in the timeline, she recalled that the economic condition of her family was not good. For many days, the family had to starve and survive only on water. Despite this pathetic state of an affair, her house was a refuge to the freedom fighters of Ballia. She remembered that many of the freedom fighters would gather in her house, and she would arrange for their food and lodging. Many times, she had to borrow food items from the neighbours. She added that her late husband, along with Shri Vishwanath Chaubey, a freedom fighter from Ballia had

planned to capture all the police stations of the district. In this regard, he mobilised the students and captured the police stations as planned. Besides this episode, she proudly stated that every year the district government celebrates the Quit India Movement, recalling the services of all the freedom fighters who laid down their lives especially in the context of this movement. On this occasion of celebration, she was especially invited as the chief guest, every year to grace the occasion.

Interview conducted by Author, Professor Seema Shukla Ojha and Bharti Pandey on 26 February 2019.

Thus, in Ballia, the collective participation of the community was witnessed during this struggle. On 13 August 1942, Shree Parasnath Mishra and Shree Ramdev, two of the freedom fighters, mobilised all segments of the population and marched to the Bhilthara railway station, and occupied it. A train reaching the station from Allahabad had many students in it. They were chanting the slogans for the attainment of *swaraj*. Under the leadership of Prashant Mishra, the freedom fighter of the region, the students took part in destroying the communication system. They also burnt the railway station. On 14 August 1942 under the leadership of Ramnagin Rai, another freedom fighter of the region, the students of different age groups took out processions. The popular slogan chanted by them was *Inqlab Zindabad*. Their participation was seriously affected when one of the *darogas* (policepersons) let loose a horse on the students. Many students were injured. Ramnagin Rai was arrested and put behind bars. Ballia is also known for the heroic role played by Chitu Pandey. He is often referred to as Sher-i-Ballia (Lion of Ballia). Under his leadership, the district severed all ties with the British Government. Even though it was of a temporary nature, it instilled confidence among the people about the administrative capability of the Indian leadership.

Highlights from oral account of an interview conducted by the survivor of the movement

An interview was conducted with Mr Ram Vichar Pandey, who was 91 years old and lives in Ballia in his ancestral house. He participated in the Quit India Movement as a child. At the time of the interview, he expressed his happiness and excitement with his engagement in the movement. He mentioned that

as the Quit India Movement spread in different regions of the then United Province, it gradually became a people's movement. Everywhere in the city, people were chanting the popular slogan '*Karo ya Maro*' (Do or Die), the clarion call given by Mahatma Gandhi. He mentioned that there was censorship of press and many of the leaders were arrested. The spread of this information was like a wild fire and it touched the hearts of the students, the women from varying backgrounds and even the adults. The people took out processions in which he also participated as a student and shouted slogans like *Gandhiji Ki Jai*, *Bharat Mata ki Jai*, *Inquilab Zindabad*, and *Jhanda Uncha Rahe Hamara*. Moreover, he stated that on 10 and 11 August 1942 many of the residents of Ballia got mobilised and the local participating leaders in different processions were arrested. On 12 August, in the same year, at Belthara road, at Ballia, Paras Nath Mishra, one of the active freedom fighters of the region, instigated the students to visit the nearby villages and destroy all the government establishments, including the railway bridges, telegraph wires, burning down the railway stations and looting the government godowns. He also said that along with his friend, he participated in the opening of the gates of the jails. He also took part in looting the government godowns, cutting of wires and hoisted the flag of Indian Independence. The *tehsil* office (local administrative subdivision) was captured and the *darogahs* (policepersons) posted were beaten severely. He added that many women joined the processions of the freedom fighters. In this context, he mentioned that in Ballia, Ms Janki Devi, Ms Kalyani Devi and Ms Parvati Devi provided local leadership to this movement. Ms Janki Devi on reaching the court at Ballia, took out her bangles along with the other women, and told the judge that he should wear the bangles and sit at home. She also sat on his chair, and mentioned that women are capable and empowered to hold any post of administration. At this point of time, the procession of women led by her shouted *Inquilab Zindabad*. Further, he stated that the ordinary women belonging to the Mali community joined several processions of the freedom fighters and they personally prepared flower garlands for them, for encouraging them to continue in their mission for the attainment of *swaraj*.

Ram Vichar Pandey, interview conducted by Author, Professor Seema Shukla Ojha and Bharti Pandey, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, 25 February 2019.

In Bihar, it was reported that an organisation had been formed known as the Students Council and the same was gaining strength day by day during this period. Its main objective was to carry on subversive activities and destroy all symbols of the British authority. It had branches at Patna, Gaya and Muzaffarpur. It was also reported that the students had made an attempt to burn the Narhee High School in Monghyr and set fire to some books in the Dhanbad High English School. Perhaps this was done to protest against the colonial government policies. Also, the government issued a warning to the government officers that the schools, having cyclostyle machine had to be prevented for misusing the same for illegal purposes. In a statement showing the total number of persons undergoing imprisonment or detention on 1 December 1942 for different offences committed during 1942 is mentioned in Table 1.

Table: 1 Information on Imprisonment and Detention

Name of the District	Imprisonment of Persons	Detention of Persons
Patna	224	9
Shahabad	529	2
Gaya	212	22
Muzaffarpur	...	Not reported
Champaran	402	12
Saran	...	Not reported
Darbhanga	378	19
Bhagalpur	...	Not Reported
Monghyr	...	1
Purnea	62	22
Santal Pargana	183	12
Ranchi	149	24
Hazaribagh	97	11
Manbhum	41	25
Palamau
Singhbhum	74	41
Dhanbad	33	13
Total	2,399	233

Source: *Fortnightly Report Received from the Provincial Government for the first half of December 1942, Home Political File, the National Archives of India, New Delhi*

The above table shows that those who were engaged in different offensive activities to dislodge the British administration were imprisoned and also detained. The treatment meted out to the freedom fighters in the jails was very inhuman, leading to various forms of physical ailments and emotional setbacks in forms of acute depression.

In the Central Province, it was reported in Archival Records that in many places, students did not attend the school and few protest meetings were organised by them. On 8 August 1942, a crowd of students shouted anti-British slogans when the military advisor was riding to the parade ground. On 9 August of the same month, a procession was taken out by the students and the meeting was held at Gopal Mandir Chowk. This was followed by taking out of *prabhat pheris* (early morning movement of the people singing religious and patriotic songs). The students of Madhav College also took out a procession and induced other boys to follow them. In Kolhapur, students openly expressed their anguish and protested against the arrest of local leaders. The post office and the means of communication were destroyed. On 14 August 1942, students hoisted a flag at the Mission Boys School. In Indore, the school and colleges were closed. The students of the Holkar and the Christian College picketed the streets and the bazaars (markets). Further, the students of the Medical College, both the male and the female took part in the distribution of leaflets and attacked the post office, treasury and telegraph office.

In Calcutta (now Kolkata), the students gave the lead to the movement by abstaining from school and the colleges, parading the streets in processions, holding meetings at different locations and so on. The roads and the streets were blocked with logs of wood, bullock carts, etc., and tramcars were burnt. In Ballygunj the sub-post office was set on fire. The Bombay Mail, The Doon Express, and The Parcel Express could not leave the Howrah station. No person was allowed to go, especially clad in European dress. At Sutahata, a huge crowd estimated to be around 40,000 led by *Vidyut-Vahini*, a member in uniform and also members of Bhagini-Sena-Sibir (Sister Army Corps) were able to take possession at the *thana*, i.e., the police station which was eventually set on fire. In Tamluk, the police station saw a procession of six thousand villagers comprising mostly of girls and women, who were seen marching to capture it under the leadership of Matangini Hazra, who was affectionately referred to as *Gandhi Buri*. The police tried to disband the procession when it

reached the outskirts of the town. Matangini Hazra, did not give up, she continued to march ahead and was shot dead by the soldiers.

In Assam, as the movement gained popularity, many persons joined the struggle. Among them, heroic role was played by a fifteen-year-old girl, Ratna Phookan. She held the National flag and kept it flying high at Barhampur that was located five miles east of Nowgong district. Inspite of heavy police firing, the movement peaked in places like Nowgong district, the Midnapur of Assam, where the number of arrests made was about 1600, 1200 convictions and 60 security prisoners. In some villages, people were able to take control of the administration and set up the *panchayats* (structure representing village level governance), which were like parallel units to the government. The peace building initiatives was also initiated and was unique to this region. It began with the setting up of the *Santi Sena* (army of peace), which was organised in most of the villages to chalk out programmes of self-sufficiency, self-defence, communal amity and other social activities. The luminary who became a martyr, and a symbol of courage and passion was Kanaklata Barua. She joined the *Mrityu Bahini* (death squad) consisting of young girls and men folk. In September 1942, the *Bahini* decided to hoist the tricolour flag at the local station located at Gohpur. The officer in charge of the police station warned the moving procession. Kanaklata and the others did not heed to the call. They continued in their resolve to unfurl the flag. Kanaklata was shot and the flag she was carrying with her was taken up by Mukunda Kakoti, who too was shot. She was only seventeen years of age at the time of her martyrdom. Further, the names of the other girls and women of different age groups, who became integral part of the Quit India movement were Maichena Saikia, Nandeswari, Buddheswari, Hemeswari, Lakshewari, Sumala, Akaman Bora, Chandika Bhuyan, Hiranya Borah, Maladai Hazarika, Maibala Barua, Maikan, Nanibala, Rebat Lahan, Makani Borodoli, Sabitri Nath, Sarojbala Kakoti, Renu Prova Saikia, Annaprova Barua, Sundari Bala Das, Ambika and Buneswari Patgiri.

In Orissa (now Odisha), students took a lead role in many places. Many of the government records mention their involvement as 'a pure student' revolting against authorities. Balasore, Cuttak and Koraput became the main centres. The *swaraj panchayats* (self government at village level) were said to have been formed in some of the villages of Balasore. The women of different age groups were also victims of the police atrocities.

In Rajasthan, the students and the children also came forward in expressing their desire for the attainment of *swaraj*. In the cities of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Bharatpur, Kishengarh, Kota, and Shahpur, the participation of the young and adult was visible. The anti-British participation was in the form of organised *hartals* (strikes), wherein people from different age groups participated, and the boys in the schools and the colleges went on strike as witnessed in other provinces. Processions were taken out by the common people showing solidarity with the freedom fighters.

The most poignant account was witnessed in Nandurbar, presently located in the state of Maharashtra. Here on 9 September 1942, the police opened and fired nineteen rounds on a crowd of about three hundred students. The children, who lost their lives for carrying the flag of freedom, were master Laldas Bulakhidas aged thirteen, Master Ghanashyam Gulabchand aged about 8, and Master Dhansukh Govardhan aged 11. All of them were shot dead. The other name that finds a mention in the government record is regarding Mr Shashidhar Neelkantha Ketkar aged about 20. He was a college student. The records also mention that the dead body of the brave boy was kicked. Later, Mr R.N. Mandlik, one of the members of the Bombay Legislative Assembly mentioned in his letter to the Governor of Bombay that the people of Nandurbar have lost all faith in the police and other local officials, and are looking only to the government at Bombay to save them from the police clutches and give them, i.e., the dead children justice.

Sometimes the students and the children were stopped because of the use of tear smoke and firing. In many places, the city transport and the other means of communication were damaged. The telephone wires were cut. Young boys and girls, mostly Deccani were taking a very prominent part in the movement. The government was quelling these disturbances with a very firm hand. Firing had occurred in several places, and even the boys and the young students have been hurt. Altogether, the situation was grave. It was also reported that a boy was shot dead by the police because he shouted, “*Gandhi Maharaj ki Jai*” (Hail Gandhiji).

The newspaper clippings from *The Bombay Chronicle* dated 19 August 1942 reported the arrest of Miss Indumathi Deo, niece of Mr Shankar Rao Deo, for distributing unauthorised pamphlets. In addition, on the same day, report of a demonstration by students was received from various parts of the province including Bombay. Further, on 22 August 1942, the police arrested the students, while

they were circulating the Satyagraha bulletin. Commenting on the student's engagement with the 1942 movement, the Commissioner of the southern division observed—it appears that the adult remains behind the scene and instigate the high school and the college students to create disturbances.

In Wardha, the teachers of the Wardha *Mahila Ashram* resigned.

In Gujarat, the news of the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders spread like wildfire. In several provinces, women and girls were taking a lead in organising demonstrations and strikes. Some of the women mentioned in the records were Gajra Behen and Gulab Behn Mehta of Ajrai village, and Ichha Behn and Nathubhai Nayak of the Gadot village. They also stored bombs, acids and small arms in their homes for blowing up the railway station and in the cutting of the telegraph lines. They showed remarkable courage in giving shelter to their men folk, who were already working in different capacities in organising activities to gain freedom. In Nadiad, a batch of 50 students who were on their way back to Ada's station, after finishing the propaganda campaign in the area, was asked to sit down and were shot by the policemen. Similarly, in Ahmedabad, attendance in schools continued to be meagre. The local Gujarati daily *Pratap*, suspended its editorials as a form of protest against Press Restriction-United Press, 20 August 1942. Regarding Ahmedabad, and certain portions of the Surat district, the report mentioned that they continued to give the most trouble. In Ahmedabad city, the school boys and the college students were completely out of control. This incident was reported for December 1942. Besides, the 24 October issue of *Free India Pamphlet*, it was mentioned even though its authenticity had yet to be confirmed with regard to Mrs Yamuna Patwardhan, the revered aged mother of Mr Achyut Patwardhan was belaboured by *lathi* when she took out a procession in Ahmedabad. Additionally, in Baroda on 19 August 1942, the Miya Gam Railway Station was stoned by the villagers and the students. On 20 August 1942, the students destroyed the railway telegraph lines near Pilot, nine miles south of Baroda. In Kaira district, on 21 October, a *prabhatt pheri* was brutally *lathi*-charged by the police. Among those who were injured was a girl child of eight years, who received a deep wound on her thigh. She was moved to the hospital in an unconscious state. In the meantime, eight leading persons were arrested in the same agitation.

In Delhi, students of the Hindu College took an active part in processions that was organised from time to time. For instance, on

the 11 December 1942, a group of students of the Hindu College attempted to hoist the flag on the college building. The principal took a strong line of action, and when students persisted, the order of their expulsion was taken out. Further, the college's annual maintenance grant for the current year was suspended on account of the misbehaviour of student in August and September, 1942. The student of the Indraprastha College for Women did not lag behind. A group of girls from the college assisted Aruna Asaf Ali in pasting anti-British posters on the walls of Delhi. No obstructionist tactics of the government could challenge the spirit of these girls as one of the student Ms Rupa Seth put it, the 'daredevils' of Indraprastha College hoisted the tricolour in the premises of the jail. The students of the college who had participated in this movement were jailed for two to three months or even more. Many students were rusticated but their appeal to the Vice-Chancellor helped them. Their case was sympathetically considered and the order for their rustication was repealed. The other college reported in the records is the Ramjas College, whose students also participated in several of the protest movements.

In the Punjab Province, students including the boys and the girls participated in the August *Kranti* in different capacities expressing their solidarity in the attainment of *swaraj*. In the, then, city of Lahore, on 10 November 1942, one hundred and four students were arrested, amongst them there were 22 girls. The participating girls distributed badges to all expressing solidarity for the attainment of freedom from the colonial administration. Moreover, they refused to pay heed to the police presence and did not go in the police van till they were told to do so.

In Andhra Pradesh on 10 August 1942, many students failed to attend their schools. They were protesting against the arrest of the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, and in the evening of that day about four hundred students held a meeting in Madakoil Street, which was presided over by B.V. Rama Rao. In this meeting, all the youthful persons spoke in support of a campaign of defying government orders of banning meetings, persuading the students and teachers in not attending schools, and advocated the boycott of all foreign goods and the fomenting of labour strikes. It also included promoting purposeless travelling without buying tickets, stopping trains by pulling alarm chains, interrupting telegraph and telephone communication, and refusing to pay tax.

The students of Madras also actively participated in the Quit India Movement. Here, a girl child Shakuntala Krishna Reddy, seven years old, took pair of her bangles and contributed to the Harijan fund. From 19 August, large number of students of the Queen Mary's College, Madras, abstained from attending classes as a form of protest against the repressive policy of the British Government and they resolved to continue their strike till the leaders like Gandhi ji were released. On 12 August 1942, a large number of students in the city of Madras, who had stayed away from the classes marched down the rail road in the direction of Pachaippa College. They were *lathi*-charged by the police. The other students who joined the protestors were the Law College and the Medical College students. A state wide *hartal*, i.e., strike was observed on 16 August 1942. More violence was witnessed in Thiruvaduthurai and a firing took place in Devakottai. In Madras, dozen of medical students were arrested for carrying the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. In Women's Christian College, Madras, a few students abstained from classes, forced the college authorities to postpone the terminal examination. Further, the students of Stanley Medical College left the hostel, carried with them the National flag. Dr Muthu Lakshmi Reddi supported more than hundred students of Madras Medical College in their overall mission.

While the British India Provinces in 1942 saw increasing participation of students, including the boys and the girls in their transient phase, the Azad Hind (Free India) led by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose also had a women's regiment that was committed to the cause winning of *swaraj*. The women of different age groups wore the badge of passion and were ready to give their life for seeing the dawn of independence. In Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia, a mass meeting was held at the premise of the local Independence League to celebrate the birthday of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. It was presided over by Srimathi C.K. Nair, the member in charge of the women's section and was attended by a large number of Indians. The proceeding of the meeting commenced with the singing of *Vande Matram* (National Song), led by the Indian girls. Srimathi Nagamma Vasudevan presented a striking picture of Rani Lakshmi Bai and exhorted the audience to emulate the qualities and her noble ideals. A young girl of thirteen years, Kumari Susila made an impassionate appeal to Indian women to come forward and play an active part in the coming struggle for the freedom of their motherland. In East Asia, the women section in all its deliberations would commence their meetings with the National Anthem and culminate with the singing of *Vande Mataram*. In these meetings, the school children

would increasingly participate. It is of significance to note that speeches given in different languages like Tamil, Malayalam and Punjabi were translated. For benefitting those not familiar with any one of the language, the local Independence League had arranged daily language classes except on Sunday.

Some of the broadcast of the women volunteer from the Indian National Army Radio Station had a strong tinge of patriotism. One of the broadcasts by Captain Lakshmi highlighted that the day will dawn when our Supreme Commander will host the flag of Azad Hind over the Vice Regal Lodge and take the salute of his victorious army in the ancient Red Fortress. One of the nurses who were part of the Rani Jhansi Regiment was Thelma Gomez, she was only twenty-year-old. In one of her messages, she said, "I wish to share the honour of freeing Mother India as a dutiful daughter." Also, Baljit Kaur's Broadcast was full of passion and commitment. In her address she stated that there was no doubt that the British were doomed and that India is going ahead to its victory. She added that if in East Asia, thousands of daughters of India could become Rani of Jhansi, lakhs of women in India can become Chand Bibis. According to her, one needed brave heart and patriotism for the mother land. Many women and girls became part of the Red Cross Unit.

Some of the literary works in the form of diaries also highlight the experience of women and girls in captivity during the 1942 *kranti* (revolution). In this very context, the niece of Mahatma Gandhi, Manu Gandhi, aged 14, narrates in her diary the feeling of the ashram mates regarding the aforementioned struggle and their jail experiences. This diary offers a fresh perspective into the women's stay in the jail and the way they dealt with hardships. Whilst, writing on 31 August 1942, she expressed the following account of her life:

"This particular account narrates the excitement of the young girls and women of the *ashram* (hermitage, retreat) regarding the arrest". She writes that "this was the third week...on the night of 30 August, it was decided that we, the women, were to join the struggle. I jumped with joy. There were three or four other girls of my age, they were elder to me by three or four years, who were also very eager to go to the prison. We asked whoever we could find to narrate their jail experiences to us. Since all the women were about to proceed to prison...all elders and seven of us including a Muslim woman set out for Wardha...Wardha prison".

Moving forward in her narrative, Manu gives a glimpse of the life in prison, particularly with regard to women. She states, *“Authorities kept us in the open yard, but it started to rain and all forty two of us were put inside a tiny cell...we chanted slogans all night...huddled over one another...not bathed in eight days...In evening women did raas (folk dance) and played games...they experienced joys of childhood spent in parental home once again in the prison. In this way, jail for them is celebration also”*. Further, she writes that there were 75 women convicts and 125 political prisoners that created a garden in the Nagpur Jail.

Thus, the Quit India Movement, depicts the significant role that was played by the then emerging future of the country. While the movement in the initial phases was leaderless, as most of the then leaders were arrested, the masses took on the responsibility of showing their dissatisfaction in a variety of ways. In fact, in many contexts leadership was assumed by the common people. They adopted both violent as well as non-violent methods in protesting against the colonial rule. The children, youth, girls and women from all walks of life became the pillars of this historic phase of our struggle. Participation was witnessed from both the rural and the urban areas of the country and also from outside India, where students comprising of boys and girls, men and women of different age groups, passionately participated in the struggle. The zeal and the commitment were also shown in various forms of literary expositions that were composed in different regional languages, which included Hindi and English. Messages often became the rallying point of mobilisation. They have also become part of the leaflets that were circulated by the students of all age groups. Interestingly, the usage of destructive technology, such as making of explosives in the form of crude bombs was found in certain places like Bombay (now Mumbai) city, and its suburbs and other areas, which highlights that a certain section of population was not convinced with the non-violent methods. Many of the freedom fighters, including women of different age group participated in a variety of manner, such as operating secret radio, giving food to freedom fighters, circulating secret messages, composing songs to show their solidarity towards the cause for the attainment of *swaraj*. It is of significance to note that many of the creative resources like cartoons, dramas and plays express their emotional outpour of the composers against the colonial exploitation, and their own personalised connect with the freedom fighters, for envisioning *swaraj*.

Even though the movement was ebbed in the most severe form, its legacy in weakening the colonial rule is noteworthy. Indeed, the manner of the participation of students is an inspiration for all. They have become the legend makers for all times. The available records in the form of archival repositories, oral accounts—lived memories that attempt to answer the question of when, where and how the little feet contributed in traversing the difficult terrain in the hope of winning *swaraj*. A collective participation of students of varying age groups from nearly all the provinces made the British administration realise that their days in India were numbered, and *swaraj* was a dream that would definitely be realised in times to come. Thus, the students did make a difference to this struggle by contributing their age and innocence for a cause. A dedication to their heroic contribution is mentioned below,

The little feet,
That walked the undulated terrain
Held the flag with determination
Attacked symbols of colonial power
Unmindful of consequence
Repression did not mar their charged spirit and
Commitment for a cause
Continued their journey
With innate hope in twinkling eye
Of seeing dew droplets
Of independent *swaraj*.

Concluding Remarks

The manner of the student's participation in this particular movement will help in instilling patriotic feeling among students. It will also help them to explore more such materials and prepare teaching-learning materials, including audio-video programmes. It will also facilitate in encouraging young scholars to take up research projects on different themes with regard to the freedom struggle of India. It will also stimulate the young mind in training themselves in collecting evidences both primary and secondary, and analysing the same to arrive at conclusions. Further, it will motivate students at the secondary stage in trying to explore possible linkage of local history with the national events, particularly with regard to movements drawn from the freedom struggle of India or other thematic areas from the discipline.

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