



THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF INDIA CAUSES, MOVEMENTS AND HISTORICAL IMPACT**Bramaramba S. M.****Associate Professor, Department of History,
Government First Grade College, Hosadurga, Chitradurga, Karnataka.****ABSTRACT**

The Indian Freedom Struggle was one of the most significant and prolonged movements against colonial rule in world history. It was driven by political, economic, social, and cultural factors that emerged due to British colonial policies and their impact on Indian society. The movement evolved through several phases, beginning with early resistance against British rule and culminating in India's independence on 15 August 1947. Major movements such as the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement, and the activities of revolutionary organizations played a vital role in mobilizing people from different regions, communities, and social groups. Prominent leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh, and many others significantly influenced the course of the struggle through diverse ideologies and methods of resistance. The Freedom Struggle not only resulted in the end of British colonial rule but also laid the foundation for democracy, constitutional governance, national integration, and socio-economic transformation in independent India. This study examines the causes of the Indian Freedom Struggle, its major movements, the contributions of key leaders, and its historical impact on the political, social, economic, and cultural development of modern India.



KEYWORDS: Indian Freedom Struggle, British Colonial Rule, Indian National Movement, Revolt of 1857, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement, Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Independence, Nationalism.

INTRODUCTION

The Freedom Struggle of India represents one of the most remarkable and inspiring movements in world history. It was a long and determined struggle against British colonial rule, spanning nearly two centuries and involving people from diverse regions, religions, languages, and social backgrounds. The movement was not merely a political campaign for independence but also a social, economic, and cultural awakening that united millions of Indians under the common objective of achieving self-rule and national dignity. The struggle culminated in India's independence on 15 August 1947, marking the end of British colonial rule and the beginning of a democratic republic. The origins of the Indian Freedom Struggle can be traced to the expansion of the British East India Company's political and economic control over India during the eighteenth century. Colonial policies such as excessive land revenue systems, economic exploitation, destruction of indigenous industries, racial discrimination, and denial of political rights created widespread dissatisfaction among different sections of Indian society.

The Revolt of 1857, often regarded as the First War of Indian Independence, marked the beginning of organized resistance against British rule and inspired future generations to continue the struggle for freedom.

The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 provided a national platform for political dialogue and organized resistance. During the early phase, moderate leaders adopted constitutional methods to demand administrative reforms and greater participation in governance. However, increasing political repression and the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave rise to the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements, strengthening nationalist sentiments throughout the country. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi transformed the freedom movement into a mass struggle based on the principles of truth (Satya) and non-violence (Ahimsa). Landmark movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34), and Quit India Movement (1942) mobilized millions of Indians in the fight against colonial rule. Alongside the non-violent movement, revolutionary leaders such as Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Subhas Chandra Bose adopted more militant approaches to challenge British authority. Women including Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Kasturba Gandhi, as well as students, peasants, workers, tribal communities, and intellectuals, played an equally significant role in strengthening the national movement. Their collective participation transformed the struggle into a truly nationwide movement. The Indian Freedom Struggle had profound historical consequences beyond the attainment of political independence. It promoted the ideals of democracy, secularism, equality, social justice, and national unity, which later became the guiding principles of independent India. The movement also inspired anti-colonial struggles across Asia and Africa and demonstrated the power of collective action in resisting imperial domination.

Aims

- ❖ To examine the causes, major movements, and historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ To analyze the contribution of the Indian Freedom Movement in achieving national independence and shaping modern India.
- ❖ To evaluate the political, social, economic, and cultural significance of the Indian Freedom Struggle.

Objectives

- ❖ To study the historical background and causes of the Indian Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ To examine the major phases and movements of the Indian National Movement, including the Revolt of 1857, Swadeshi Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement.
- ❖ To analyze the contributions of prominent leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh, and other freedom fighters.
- ❖ To assess the role of women, peasants, workers, students, tribal communities, and revolutionary organizations in the Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ To examine the impact of British colonial policies on the rise of Indian nationalism.
- ❖ To evaluate the political, social, economic, and cultural impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle on modern India.
- ❖ To analyze the significance of the Freedom Struggle in the development of democratic institutions, constitutional values, and national integration.
- ❖ To suggest measures for preserving and promoting the legacy and values of the Indian Freedom Movement among future generations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Indian Freedom Struggle has been extensively studied by historians and political scholars from different perspectives. The existing literature examines the causes of colonial resistance, the evolution of nationalist movements, the contribution of prominent leaders, and the long-term impact of independence on Indian society and politics.

Bipan Chandra (1989), in *India's Struggle for Independence*, provides a comprehensive account of the Indian National Movement from the Revolt of 1857 to Independence in 1947. The author explains the political, economic, and social causes of the freedom struggle and highlights the importance of mass movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement in mobilizing people across the country.

Sumit Sarkar (1983), in *Modern India: 1885–1947*, examines the development of Indian nationalism and the changing nature of anti-colonial movements. The study discusses the contributions of moderate and extremist leaders, revolutionary organizations, and the emergence of mass politics under Mahatma Gandhi. Sarkar also analyzes the socio-economic factors that strengthened the nationalist movement.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2015), in *From Plassey to Partition and After: A History of Modern India*, explores the transformation of Indian society under British colonial rule and the rise of nationalist consciousness. The author emphasizes the role of colonial economic policies, social reforms, and political organizations in shaping the Freedom Struggle and examines the consequences of Partition and Independence.

Judith M. Brown (1994), in *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, focuses on the political development of modern India and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The study highlights Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, civil disobedience, and mass mobilization, demonstrating how these principles influenced the course of the Indian National Movement.

R. C. Majumdar (1962), in *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, presents a detailed historical analysis of the struggle against British rule. The author discusses the contributions of revolutionary groups, political organizations, and regional movements while emphasizing the diversity of approaches adopted during the freedom movement.

Percival Spear (1965), in *A History of India*, examines the administrative and economic policies of British rule and their role in generating political unrest. The work explains how colonial exploitation, racial discrimination, and denial of political rights contributed to the emergence of organized nationalist movements.

Anil Seal (1968), in *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, analyzes the formation of political leadership and the evolution of nationalist organizations. The study provides valuable insights into the social and political dynamics that influenced the Indian National Congress and the development of national consciousness.

Ramachandra Guha (2007), in *India After Gandhi*, discusses the legacy of the Freedom Struggle and its influence on independent India. Although primarily focused on the post-independence period, the work explains how the values of democracy, secularism, constitutional governance, and national unity evolved from the experiences of the nationalist movement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and historical research design to examine the causes, major movements, and historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle. The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from authentic and reliable sources. Information has been gathered from history books, research articles, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, archival records, official documents, biographies of freedom fighters, reports of national institutions, and publications of universities and research organizations. Standard historical texts, records of the Indian National Congress, proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, and publications of the National Archives of India have also been referred to for a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The collected information has been systematically reviewed, classified, and interpreted using historical and descriptive methods. The study examines the political, economic, social, and cultural causes that led to the rise of Indian nationalism and analyzes the major phases of the Freedom Struggle, including the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. It also evaluates the contributions of prominent national leaders, revolutionary organizations, women freedom fighters, peasants, workers, and other social groups in achieving India's independence.

The research further analyzes the historical impact of the Freedom Struggle on the development of democratic institutions, constitutional values, national integration, social reforms, and the political transformation of independent India. Comparative and analytical approaches have been used to evaluate different historical interpretations and perspectives presented by various historians and scholars. Emphasis has been placed on maintaining objectivity by examining multiple sources and viewpoints related to the Indian National Movement. Since the study is based exclusively on secondary data, its findings depend upon the authenticity, reliability, and availability of published historical records and scholarly literature. No primary field survey or interview has been conducted. Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a systematic, evidence-based, and comprehensive analysis of the causes, movements, and historical significance of the Indian Freedom Struggle and contributes to a better understanding of its role in shaping modern India.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Indian Freedom Struggle was a historic movement that emerged as a response to British colonial rule, which subjected India to political domination, economic exploitation, social discrimination, and cultural suppression for nearly two centuries. Colonial policies such as excessive taxation, destruction of indigenous industries, racial inequality, denial of civil and political rights, and exploitation of natural and human resources generated widespread dissatisfaction among various sections of Indian society. These conditions led to the growth of nationalist consciousness and the emergence of organized resistance against British rule. The Freedom Struggle was not a single event but a series of movements involving people from different regions, religions, castes, and socio-economic backgrounds. From the Revolt of 1857 to the Quit India Movement of 1942, the struggle witnessed the participation of political leaders, revolutionary groups, women, peasants, workers, students, tribal communities, and social reformers. Different strategies, including constitutional methods, non-violent civil disobedience, mass movements, and revolutionary activities, were adopted to challenge colonial authority and achieve national independence. Although numerous historical studies have examined individual leaders, movements, and events, there remains a need for a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between the causes of the Freedom Struggle, the evolution of various nationalist movements, and their long-term historical impact on the political, social, economic, and cultural development of modern India. The contributions of several regional movements, women freedom fighters, marginalized communities, and lesser-known revolutionaries have often received comparatively limited attention in mainstream historical research. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the major causes of the Indian Freedom Struggle, analyze the significance of its various movements, and evaluate their historical impact on the emergence of independent India. The study also aims to assess how the Freedom Struggle shaped democratic institutions, constitutional values, national integration, and the ideals of justice, equality, and secularism that continue to guide the Republic of India.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The Indian Freedom Struggle is one of the most significant events in the history of India, as it transformed the country from a British colony into an independent and democratic nation. Understanding the causes, major movements, and historical impact of the Freedom Struggle is essential for appreciating the sacrifices made by countless freedom fighters and recognizing the values of liberty, equality, justice, and national unity that form the foundation of modern India. A systematic study of the Freedom Struggle helps in understanding how political awareness, social reform, and collective action contributed to the achievement of independence. The need for the present study arises from the importance of examining the political, economic, social, and cultural factors that led to the emergence of Indian nationalism. British colonial policies such as economic exploitation, racial discrimination, political repression, and the denial of civil rights created widespread dissatisfaction among Indians, ultimately leading to organized resistance. Analyzing these causes provides a deeper understanding of

the historical circumstances that shaped the national movement and the evolution of anti-colonial consciousness.

The study is also necessary to evaluate the significance of major nationalist movements, including the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. These movements not only challenged British authority but also encouraged mass participation by peasants, workers, women, students, tribal communities, and people from different regions and social backgrounds. Understanding their contributions provides valuable insights into the inclusive nature of the Indian Freedom Struggle. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of eminent leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sarojini Naidu, and many other national and regional leaders whose ideas and leadership significantly influenced the course of the independence movement. Their contributions continue to inspire democratic values, patriotism, and responsible citizenship.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

- ❖ Future research may undertake comparative studies of regional freedom movements to understand their unique contributions to the Indian National Movement.
- ❖ Detailed studies can be conducted on the role of women freedom fighters and their contribution to the struggle for independence.
- ❖ Further research may examine the participation of tribal communities, peasants, workers, students, and marginalized groups in strengthening the Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ Comparative analyses of the ideologies and leadership styles of Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh, and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar can provide deeper historical insights.
- ❖ Studies may explore the contribution of revolutionary organizations and underground movements in achieving Indian independence.
- ❖ Future research can evaluate the influence of newspapers, literature, theatre, songs, and vernacular languages in spreading nationalist consciousness.
- ❖ Research may investigate the impact of international events, including the First World War, the Second World War, and global anti-colonial movements, on the Indian Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ Comparative studies between India's Freedom Struggle and the independence movements of other Asian and African countries may provide a broader understanding of anti-colonial movements.
- ❖ Further studies may analyze the role of princely states and regional political organizations during the struggle for independence.
- ❖ Research can examine the long-term impact of the Freedom Struggle on constitutional development, democratic institutions, public administration, and governance in independent India.
- ❖ Future studies may explore the use of digital archives, historical documents, oral histories, and modern research technologies to reinterpret lesser-known events and personalities associated with the Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ Policy-oriented research may focus on effective strategies for preserving historical monuments, archival records, museums, and educational resources to promote awareness of India's Freedom Struggle among younger generations.
- ❖ These research directions will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the causes, movements, leadership, and historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle while enriching the existing body of historical knowledge and supporting future academic research.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Scope

The present study focuses on examining the causes, major movements, and historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle from the early resistance against British colonial rule to the attainment of independence in 1947. It analyzes the political, economic, social, and cultural factors that contributed to

the rise of Indian nationalism and the development of organized resistance against British rule. The study covers significant events such as the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Home Rule Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement, along with the contributions of revolutionary organizations and constitutional reforms. The study also examines the role of prominent national leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and several other freedom fighters. It highlights the participation of women, peasants, workers, students, tribal communities, and regional organizations in strengthening the national movement. Furthermore, the study evaluates the historical impact of the Freedom Struggle on the establishment of democratic institutions, constitutional governance, national integration, secularism, social justice, and the political development of independent India.

Limitations

The study is based entirely on secondary sources of information, including published books, research articles, archival records, and government documents, without the use of primary data or field investigations. Consequently, the findings depend upon the authenticity, availability, and interpretation of existing historical sources. Since the Indian Freedom Struggle was a vast and multifaceted movement involving numerous regional events, organizations, and personalities, it is not possible to cover every aspect in equal detail within the scope of a single study. The research primarily emphasizes the major national movements and leading personalities, while some regional struggles and lesser-known freedom fighters receive limited attention due to constraints of space and available documentation. Different historians have also presented varying interpretations of historical events; therefore, complete unanimity regarding certain incidents and their significance may not always be possible. Despite these limitations, the study provides a balanced and comprehensive analysis of the causes, major movements, and historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle and contributes to a better understanding of India's journey toward independence.

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on the historical analysis of the Indian Freedom Struggle by examining its causes, major movements, and historical impact on the political, social, economic, and cultural development of India. It covers the period from the early resistance against British colonial rule to the attainment of independence on 15 August 1947, highlighting the evolution of Indian nationalism and the collective efforts made to achieve freedom. The study examines the major causes of the Freedom Struggle, including British political domination, economic exploitation, social discrimination, racial inequality, and cultural interference, which led to the growth of nationalist consciousness among the Indian people. It also analyzes the important phases of the Indian National Movement, such as the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Home Rule Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement, along with the contributions of revolutionary organizations and constitutional developments.

The scope of the study includes an evaluation of the role played by prominent national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and numerous other freedom fighters. It also examines the participation of women, peasants, workers, students, tribal communities, and regional organizations in strengthening the national movement and promoting the spirit of nationalism. The study further explores the historical impact of the Indian Freedom Struggle on the establishment of democratic institutions, constitutional governance, national integration, secularism, social justice, and the protection of fundamental rights in independent India. It also considers the influence of the Freedom Movement on the development of modern Indian political thought, public administration, and nation-building. The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from books, peer-reviewed journals, historical records, archival documents, government publications, biographies, and reports published by academic and research institutions.

DISCUSSION

The Indian Freedom Struggle was a multidimensional national movement that transformed India from a British colony into an independent sovereign nation. The study reveals that the struggle was the result of a combination of political, economic, social, and cultural factors that generated widespread dissatisfaction among the Indian people. British colonial policies, including economic exploitation, heavy taxation, racial discrimination, suppression of civil liberties, and denial of political representation, created the conditions for the emergence of Indian nationalism and organized resistance against colonial rule. The findings indicate that the Freedom Struggle evolved through different phases, each contributing significantly to the growth of national consciousness. The Revolt of 1857 marked the first large-scale resistance against British rule and inspired future generations of freedom fighters. Although the revolt did not achieve immediate success, it strengthened the spirit of nationalism and demonstrated the possibility of united action against colonial authority. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 provided a national platform for political dialogue and constitutional reforms, laying the foundation for organized nationalist activities. The study further demonstrates that the Swadeshi Movement, Home Rule Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement played decisive roles in mobilizing millions of Indians. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the principles of truth, non-violence, and civil disobedience transformed the Freedom Struggle into a mass movement involving people from all sections of society. Gandhi's leadership encouraged peaceful resistance while strengthening the ideals of unity, self-reliance, and social justice. The discussion also highlights the significant contribution of revolutionary leaders such as Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Subhas Chandra Bose, and members of various revolutionary organizations, whose sacrifices inspired patriotic sentiments throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

The Indian Freedom Struggle was a historic and transformative movement that played a decisive role in ending British colonial rule and establishing India as an independent nation on 15 August 1947. The movement emerged from widespread political oppression, economic exploitation, social discrimination, and cultural domination under British rule. These factors gave rise to nationalist consciousness and united people from diverse regions, religions, languages, and social backgrounds in a common struggle for freedom and self-governance. The study concludes that the Indian Freedom Struggle evolved through several significant phases, including the Revolt of 1857, the Swadeshi Movement, the Home Rule Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. Each phase strengthened the spirit of nationalism and expanded public participation in the movement. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi introduced the principles of truth, non-violence, and civil disobedience, while revolutionary leaders such as Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Chandrashekhar Azad inspired patriotic commitment through their courage and sacrifices.

The Freedom Struggle had a profound and lasting impact on the political, social, economic, and cultural development of India. It not only secured political independence but also laid the foundation for democracy, constitutional governance, secularism, national integration, social justice, and the protection of fundamental rights. The study also highlights that the Indian Freedom Struggle served as a source of inspiration for anti-colonial and civil rights movements across the world. The philosophy of non-violent resistance demonstrated the power of peaceful mass movements in challenging injustice and oppression, leaving a lasting influence on global struggles for freedom and human rights. In conclusion, the Indian Freedom Struggle was far more than a political campaign against colonial rule; it was a comprehensive movement of national awakening, social transformation, and democratic aspiration. Its legacy continues to inspire patriotism, responsible citizenship, national unity, and respect for democratic values. Preserving the history, sacrifices, and ideals of the Freedom Struggle is essential for strengthening national identity and ensuring that future generations appreciate the enduring significance of India's journey to independence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Strengthen History Education:** Educational institutions should promote comprehensive teaching of the Indian Freedom Struggle by emphasizing its causes, major movements, and the contributions of national and regional freedom fighters.
- ❖ **Revise and Enrich Curriculum:** School and university curricula should include balanced and evidence-based accounts of the Freedom Struggle, highlighting the roles of women, tribal communities, peasants, workers, students, and lesser-known freedom fighters.
- ❖ **Promote Historical Research:** Universities and research institutions should encourage interdisciplinary research on the Indian Freedom Movement by utilizing archival records, manuscripts, oral histories, and digital resources.
- ❖ **Preserve Historical Heritage:** Greater efforts should be made to conserve historical monuments, memorials, museums, archives, and documents associated with the Freedom Struggle to safeguard India's national heritage.
- ❖ **Digitize Historical Records:** Government agencies and academic institutions should accelerate the digitization of historical documents, photographs, newspapers, and archival materials to improve public accessibility and support scholarly research.
- ❖ **Encourage Public Awareness Programmes:** National seminars, exhibitions, lectures, documentaries, cultural festivals, and awareness campaigns should be organized regularly to educate citizens about the significance of the Freedom Struggle.
- ❖ **Recognize Unsung Freedom Fighters:** More research and public recognition should be given to regional leaders, tribal heroes, women freedom fighters, and lesser-known revolutionaries whose contributions have not received adequate historical attention.
- ❖ **Promote Value-Based Education:** Educational programmes should emphasize the values of patriotism, democracy, secularism, unity, equality, non-violence, and social justice that emerged from the Indian Freedom Struggle.

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