



WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS OF FREE INDIA

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Abstract:

Historically, women have been oppressed throughout the world. However, it was and still is more prevalent in India as compared to western nations. Since the biases against women are so deeply rooted in India, even standing toe to toe with men can be difficult for many women. The trailblazers mentioned in this paper are a few of the many fighting against this bias.

Key words: *Women Trailblazers, First Woman, Female Oppression.*

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INTRODUCTION:

Historically, women have been oppressed throughout the world. However, it was and still is more prevalent in India as compared to western nations. Women have to face challenges such as female foeticide, child marriage, dowry, domestic violence, forced evictions and divorce, societal violence, sexual harassment and rape even today. Although these actions have been deemed illegal by law, they are still rampantly prevalent in India.

As such, women have to fight against unending and unyielding social programming and resulting biases at every stage of their life starting from the conception of the foetus, that is before they are even born. These biases are not only present in men but in women as well. There can be no stranger irony than the oppressed becoming instrument of their oppression. Women are women's worst enemies in Indian patriarchy. Since the biases against women are so deeply rooted in India, even standing toe to toe with men can be difficult for

many women. The trailblazers mentioned in this paper are a few of the many fighting against this bias. They are those women who have fought against all odds, overcome every hurdle and challenged every social norm just so that future generations can stand toe to toe with men.

M.C. MaryKom:

Kom was born in a village in rural Manipur. She came from a poor family and grew up in humble surroundings.

In 1998, Dingko Singh, a fellow Manipuri returned from the Bangkok Asian games with a gold medal. This inspired Kom to try boxing.

When she was 15, she decided to leave her hometown to study at the Imphal Sports Academy. She started training under her first coach in Imphal. Thereafter, she trained under the Manipur state boxing coach. Kom kept her interest in boxing a secret from her father, himself an ex-wrestler, as he was concerned that boxing would hurt Kom's face and spoil her chances of marriage. However, he



learned of it when Kom's photo appeared in a newspaper after she won the state boxing championship in 2000. Kom won her first medal at the Asian Championship in 2003. After three years, her father finally began to support Kom's pursuits in boxing as he grew convinced of her love of boxing. After giving birth to her first child, Kom started training once again. What followed was a flurry of wins. She won a silver medal at the 2008 Asian Women's Boxing Championship, a fourth successive gold medal at the AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships in 2008, a gold medal at the 2009 Asian Indoor Games, a gold medal at the 2010 Asian Women's Boxing Championship, her fifth consecutive gold at the AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships in 2010 followed by a bronze medal at 2010 Asian Games.

In 2010 she had the honour of bearing the Queen's Baton in the opening ceremony run in the stadium for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. She did not compete, however, as women's boxing was not included in the Commonwealth Games.

In 2011, she won gold in the Asian Women's Cup. Kom, who had previously fought in the 46 and 48 kg categories, shifted to the 51 kg category after the world body decided to allow women's boxing in only three weight categories eliminating the lower weight classes.

At the 2012 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championship, Kom was competing not just for the championship itself but also for a place at the 2012 London Olympics in London, the first time women's boxing had been featured as an Olympic sport. She was the only Indian woman to qualify for the boxing event.

She stood third in the competition and garnered an Olympic bronze medal. In recognition, the Manipur Government awarded her Rs 50 lakhs and two acres of land in a cabinet meeting held on August 2012.

In 2014, Kom won her first gold medal at the Asian Games. In 2017, she received an unprecedented fifth gold medal at the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) women's boxing championships.

The only major international event that she had not won a medal in was the Commonwealth Games, as her category Light flyweight was not included until the 2018 Commonwealth Games. At this point, Kom proceeded to win the gold medal.

In 2018, she became the first woman to win 6 World Championships, achieving this feat at the 10th AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships.

In 2019, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) named Kom as a female representative of boxing's athlete ambassadors group for the 2020 Summer Olympics.

In May 2021, Kom won her 7th medal at the Asian Championships.

In 2015, Kom became the first amateur to surpass several professional athletes in India in earnings, endorsements and awards. She is the first amateur athlete to win the Padma Bhushan.

MC MaryKom set a new standard in amateur boxing without ever competing in professional boxing.

Pratibha Patil:

Patil was born in a village in Maharashtra. After earning a Bachelor of Law degree, Patil then began to practice law at the Jalgaon District Court, while also taking interest in social issues such as improving the conditions faced by Indian women.

In 1962, at the age of 27, she was elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for the Jalgaon



constituency. Thereafter she won in the Muktainagar constituency on four consecutive occasions between 1967 and 1985, before becoming a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha between 1985 and 1990. In the 1991 elections for the 10th Lok Sabha, she was elected as a Member of Parliament representing the Amravati constituency. A period of retirement from politics followed later in the decade.

Patil had held various Cabinet portfolios during her period in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and she had also held official positions in both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. In addition, she had been for some years the president of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee and also held office as Director of the National Federation of Urban Co-operative Banks and Credit Societies and as a Member of the Governing Council of the National Co-operative Union of India.

On 8 November 2004, she was appointed the 17th Governor of Rajasthan, the first woman to hold that office.

Patil was announced as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) candidate for Presidency on 14 June 2007. Due to the presidential role being largely a figurehead position, the selection of the candidate is often arranged by consensus among the various political parties and the candidate runs unopposed. Contrary to the normal pattern of events, Patil faced a challenge in the election. Her challenger was Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the incumbent vice-president and a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) veteran. Shekhawat stood as an independent candidate and was supported by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a group led by the

BJP, although the Shiv Sena party, which was a part of NDA, supported Patil.

Patil won the election held on 19 July 2007. She garnered nearly two-thirds of the votes and took oath on 25 July 2007, as India's 12th president but 1st woman President. The Chief Justice of India Shri K.G. Balakrishnan administering the oath of the office of the President of India to Smt. Pratibha Patil at a swearing-in ceremony in the central hall of Parliament, in New Delhi.

Richa Kar:

Kar came from a traditional Indian upbringing. Her mother was a homemaker who didn't work outside of the home. Even at an early age, Kar began considering a career. She spent a great deal of her time churning ideas regarding her future as a professional in the workforce, much to the initial dismay of her parents.

Kar came from a culture heavily steeped in ancient Indian tradition. Not only was it unheard of for women in India to work, but it was also even more unheard of for them to pursue entrepreneurship. But the deal breaker for Kar was this: She wanted to open up a women's lingerie business. It was something she wanted to share with her parents once the idea came upon her.

Her transparency in sharing her lingerie business idea with her parents would prove to be a difficult journey. Because lingerie bears a negative stamp, her parents had strong objectives. Her mother thought about the social stigma that would follow her daughter and was worried about the subsequent shame it would bring upon the entire family. Their opposition was so strong that her father refused to support her, but she remained undaunted.



Lingerie is a sensitive topic for many women worldwide, as it involves shopping for one's own customized undergarments. The expedition was still a transparent experience because it required women to buy their products from a male vendor. Most lingerie was made for smaller women, so there weren't a lot of options for those who were larger. This put a lot of customers at a disadvantage, which made Kar think even more about her business. Kar knew she could create an online business where women could shop in secret from a remote area and choose from a variety of sizes.

The idea of shopping for women's lingerie without judgement was born.

Within a single hour of being launched, Zivame - Kar's new company - received its very first order, a fact that would set her as the gold standard of success for women across India. She went on to expand her line for women of all sizes, thus encouraging all women to shop regardless.

After her first major sale, investors started eyeballing Zivame. One person offered her \$3 million while another put in \$6M. Another \$40M followed, and that increased the value of her online business exponentially.

Kar soon cemented her reputation which proved her detractors forever wrong. Kar started attacking her goals with renewed fervour as she continued building her online store with a host of different ideas that would expand beyond undergarments. Soon, other items such as swimwear and pyjamas were added.

As a result of Richa Kar's effort, Ladies' lingerie was taken to a greater level of respect.

Shila Dawre:

Dawre was born and brought up in a small town in

Maharashtra. As she grew up, Dawre's parents wanted her to get married. But she had dreams that she wanted to achieve and so was not ready to get married and settle down. She was good at driving, and She wanted to make it her profession. So at the age of 18, in 1988, she left her parent's home and headed to Pune to follow her dreams.

After coming to Pune, she tried to rent a rickshaw. But she faced a lot of struggle. Nobody was ready to rent a rickshaw to a woman. Not only was driving autos considered to be a profession suitable only for men but women drivers were considered unsafe. So, nobody wanted to risk their safety by having a woman driver. But she did not give up. She was determined to turn her dream of driving into reality. Dawre sought the help of women's self-help groups in Pune. She told them how she was facing issues trying to find autos to drive. This move helped, and with the help of these groups, Dawre got to drive autos when the regular drivers were on leave. This is how she set foot in the world of driving. With very little earnings, she started to save every rupee she earned. She eventually saved up enough to buy herself her own auto. Over some time, Dawre managed to get support from her fellow auto drivers too.

Once a traffic constable hit Dawre. She was scared, but, she hit him back. That was the time Dawre realized that she was not alone. All the auto union members supported her to protest against the treatment she was given. She was now one of them. A fellow auto driver. A part of their tribe. And at the time when she needed her tribe, the members were willing to take a risk and stand by her, to support her self-respect.

Passengers were impressed with Dawre's courage,



and she received a lot of appreciation from them. The validation of her choice was when she saw parents tell their kids to see what a great job Dawre was doing and that they should learn from her.

Dawre has been extensively covered by the media for her courage and path-breaking career choice. She has been featured in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's #BharatKiLaxmi campaign. She has also been recognized in the Limca Book of World Records as the first woman auto-rickshaw driver in the country.

Today, ShilaDawre has two beautiful daughters, a loving husband and her own transport business.

CONCLUSION:

Inspiration can be found in the most unlikely places and drive the human spirit to succeed even more. In a country where women are still working towards achieving independence and basic rights, the above-mentioned women have made us understand what a woman can truly accomplish. They pursued their dreams and laid a foundation for many women to take up different routes to achieve success. They proved that hard work and determination pay well. Their victories and successes are a result of their continual efforts and aspirations. The criticism they took ignited a strong rebellious spirit within them. But the real driving force was a passion for sculpting a better India for all those who follow.

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