



ROLE OF WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II

GUL BASISTA

MASTERS OF HISTORY

**AMITY INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, AMITY UNIVERSITY, UTTAR PRADESH
INDIA**

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates women's many roles and contributions throughout World War II, emphasising their impact on both the home front and the battlefields. The study looks at how the war triggered a shift in gender norms, with women taking on responsibilities usually held by men and demonstrating their ability in a variety of fields. It goes into the experiences of women serving in military formations like the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Auxiliary Territorial Service as well as their involvement in resistance activities around Europe. Furthermore, the study looks into the major presence of women in the workforce, notably in businesses important to the war effort as munitions factories and shipyards.

The emerging role of women in World War II, men joined the military to fight big scale war. In such a situation, the demands for labour could be met only by adding women for other works. Women played a significant role in home as well as in the various field works, women contributions were diverse. Along with this women were included in the war period to contribute to the work which earlier only men could do, mainly working in the factories and producing war related materials. In the absence of their male partners, from housekeeping to cooking and working in defence women played a significant role during the war.

KEY WORDS: Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)

Propaganda

Women's Army Corps (WAC)

Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)

Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS)

INTRODUCTION

World War II a six year war dated from 1939 to 1945 during this time period world witnessed many prominent personalities. Whenever we talk about World War II , many influential names come to our minds such as Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler , Joseph Stalin and Erwin Rommel except from these there are few more eminent personalities whose contributions are remembered today. This war had many anonymous contributions. World War II was an example of total war which is basically a military conflict. In this war Allied and Axis powers were fighting with all of their civilian resources, infrastructure seen as a legitimate military targets in sake of securing victory. All resources were collected by giving priority to the war in the society. Allied and Axis powers had to use all of their population to defeat the enemy country At a time when the demand for war material was increasing,

The emerging role of women in World War II , men joined the military to fight big scale war In such a situation, the demands for labour could be met only by adding women for other works. Women played a significant role in home as well as in the various field works , women contributions were diverse. Along with this women were included in the war period to contribute to the work which earlier only men could do, mainly working in the factories and producing war related materials. In the absence of their male partners, from housekeeping to cooking and working in defence women played a significant role during the war. Women roles were different according to countries for example, on one side Soviet Union's women directly joined army units and on the other side in United States women were only involved in non combatant roles in the war mainly as supporting staff which included Administration, Electricians, Nurse , Mechanic , Factory workers, Truck drivers and Assistant pilot. In United States , Britain and other war related countries Special Women Auxiliary Air Forces were organised from 1940 to 1942. June 1941 Canadian Women Army Corps was established and Auxiliary Air Force was created in 1942. Apart from this, by name of the 93rd

Searchlight Regiment with all female British Air Defence Unit was formed in October 1942. During war for many years Britain engaged women in armed forces, Unmarried women of working age from 30 or below were either deployed in the armed forces or included in industrial work. During the war period there were many changes in the lives of not only common women but the royal family women witnessed some changes. Rosie the Riveter was a symbolic cultural icon representing women who worked in factories and shipyards during the war. This poster was accompanied by the encouraging quote “ we can do it! “ to influence other women to join the war efforts. Apart from the factories women were also involved in other aspects of the war effort; many women also played a crucial role as a nurse by curing the wounds of the war injured men one of them popularly known name was Jane Kendeigh at the age of 22 she became the first American Navy flight nurse to fly in active combat zone in 1945. Other one was Nancy Wake who was a nurse as well as a

journalist. Nancy served as a British agent special operation's executive in France during the war and if we talk about the direct participation in the direct combat role of the war the names of several women became prominent one of them is commander Lyudmila Pavlichenko She was a Soviet sniper who is known as the most successful sniper in the entire history and Virginia Hall one of the most distinguished spy of the Allied powers. Her one leg was artificial , Yet she fearlessly built a network of spy and helped French commander by organising supply of arms to defeat the enemy region.

On the other hand, Lieutenant Reba Whittle , Jean Bird , Noor Inayat Khan and several more are the names of those women whose contributions were associated with the history of World War II. By the time the demands for public transportation increased women came out and served as the street car conductors for the first time. 1945 witnessed the growth of electrical jobs by 89% which were handled by women. Also an organisation was formed of civilian women pilots which was named Women Airforce Service Pilots whose objective was to assist in stage side mission during the war, such as flying planes from one location to another when it was needed. Former Health Secretary of the United States, Otesia Culp Hobby stated that all those women who contributed and marched in the war were seen as citizens of the nation not only as a normal women. This was a civilian people war and everyone was involved in it. Certainly, in that period women were seen on such a large scale for the first time women had come out of the house and wanted to prove that they were non less than men in any kind of work and in the situation of war , the government was giving women an opportunity to serve their country.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Studying the role of women in World War II is not only about filling historical gaps but also about understanding the profound social transformations that occurred as a result of their contributions. This knowledge is vital for appreciating the past, understanding the present, and shaping a more equitable future.

To recognize and document the diverse and significant contributions women made to the war effort.

Ensuring a complete and accurate representation of history, acknowledging the roles and experiences of women for historical accuracy.

Providing insights into gender roles and the impact of war on women's societal positions and rights.

Furthermore to inspire future generations by highlighting women's resilience, adaptability, and strength during challenging times.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research style for this project is mixed-methods, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gain a thorough understanding of the roles that women performed throughout World War II. Combining the two approaches enabled more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the topic.

WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT

The United States entered World War II in 1941 after a surprise Japanese attack on the US navy at Pearl Harbor. America's engagement in World War II brought about changes on the home front, as well as transformations in men's and women's roles. Many men enlisted in the military, leaving a big number of jobs open. Wartime manufacturing demands for additional planes, artillery, and other military goods necessitated an increase in the labor force. The US government urged women to fill these job shortages. Women were employed in a number of jobs that had previously been held by men. They joined the military, worked in defense facilities, drove streetcars, worked on farms, and took on various domestic responsibilities. During the war, women joined volunteer organisations to help the home front and military. The United Services Organization (USO), the American Red Cross, the American Women's Voluntary Service (AWVS), and the United States Citizens Defense Corps all volunteered their services throughout the conflict. The AWVS, modelled after the British Women's Voluntary Service, was started in January 1940. Its volunteers, who numbered around 325,000 women, were involved in a variety of activities such as canteen service, war bond sales, photography, and ambulance driving. The AWVS was an interracial organisation comprised of African American women and other minority groups.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Before entering World War II, the United States began preparing for the battle. In preparation for war, Eleanor Roosevelt began pressing for women to play a larger part in the military. In May 1942, the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) was formed and affiliated to the Army, but not incorporated. Oveta Culp Hobby was appointed director of the WAAC. The name was changed to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1943, when the group was granted full military status. Other branches of the military promptly followed suit. The Navy established the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) in July 1942. The Marine Corps Women's Reserves was also established in July 1942, albeit it would be months before women could join. Each of the women's groups had unique entry requirements. The WAVES, for example, only accepted women aged 20 to 36, whereas the WAC allowed women to enlist up to the age of 50. Despite the fact that women were given new chances and filled over 200 distinct non-combat occupations, the groupings remained segregated and racist. Initially, the WAC was the only women's group

that welcomed African American women to serve. The WAC was the only component of the women's military that could send personnel overseas. As a result, WACs were sent in all theatres of battle. When the war ended in 1945, the continued presence of women in the military was questioned. The World War II Memorial and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, both in Washington, DC, commemorate the contributions of World War II servicewomen to the nation.

WOMEN ON THE FARM

During World War II, the United States became more concerned about food shortages both at home and overseas. The United States contributed to the food supply of its allies in Europe and the Pacific through the Lend-Lease Program. To meet the requirements of the American home front, the US government implemented food rationing in 1942. Sugar was the first item rationed, followed by consumables like butter, milk, and meat. The government started growing more food to feed the home front, troops, and allies. However, because many men left the farms to join the military, more agricultural laborers were needed to produce the extra food required during the war. Eleanor Roosevelt visited Britain that same year and observed the work that women were doing on farms through the Women's Land Army to help with the food issue. When Roosevelt returned to the United States, she became assistant director of the Office of Civilian Defense and began campaigning for women's participation in agriculture. However, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) opposed the idea of women working on farms. Many people on the home front, including government officials, did not believe women possessed the necessary abilities or strength to perform such tasks. Labor shortages continued to disrupt agricultural output, so the government shifted its stance on hiring women on American farms. In April 1943, Congress approved legislation to establish the Emergency Farm Labor Program. This scheme permitted a diverse range of individuals to labor the land, including Italian and German prisoners of war, Caribbean residents, students, and women. The Women's Land Army of America, subsequently renamed the Women's Land Army (WLA), hired women on farms around the country. The WLA was operational from 1943 to 1945. Florence L. Hall, a senior home economist with the USDA Extension Service, served as the WLA director. The United States Crop Corps oversaw the system, which was structured by state and municipal governments as well as Extension Services. These groups worked together to recruit and train women for the WLA. Many women, however, were not given official training. They learned on the job. Women worked on farms for varying amounts of time. They may labor for the WLA for one to two weeks during their vacation, during the summer or harvest seasons, or throughout the year. The majority of women worked seasonally on farms. It is estimated that 2.5 million women took part in the program, helping to feed the country and its allies.

WOMEN IN DEFENSE INDUSTRY

America's involvement in World War II resulted in an increase for the defense sector. The country had to manufacture the trucks, artillery, ammo, tanks, and planes required to combat the Axis powers. The country invested financial and intellectual resources in the development of atomic weapons as well. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilisation in 1943 and the War Production Board in 1942 to oversee the federal organisations involved in producing military hardware. The private manufacturing sector's production operations were supervised by both bodies. Additionally, they gave these enterprises federal financial support to expand their existing manufacturing facilities, develop new ones, and buy more machinery for production. A huge proportion of the population had been unemployed during the Great Depression. The growth in manufacturing jobs during the war helped to significantly reduce the unemployment rate. Millions of women worked during the war, with many in the defense industry. Several female war laborers found jobs in manufacturing throughout the war. A considerable number of women transitioned from their pre-war careers as secretaries or service workers to the production line. Other women joined the workforce for the first time. Women's reasons for taking on such work varied. Some joined defense plants to show patriotic support for the country during the war. Often, these jobs paid women more than they might in other jobs, such as domestic service or secretarial employment. Before the war, African American women were frequently employed as domestic servants, performing a wide range of household tasks from cooking and cleaning to child care. By 1944, the proportion of African American women in domestic service had declined by 15.3%, while their employment in defense had climbed by 11.5%. Chinese American women also obtained employment in the defense industry. Prior to World War II, they were frequently subjected to employment discrimination. In its pages throughout the war, the newspaper of Boston Navy Yard, The Shipyard News, highlighted women from all walks of life: women with college degrees, young girls just out of high school, married women, grandmothers, and women whose husbands or siblings were serving abroad. Even though the women's faces are beaming at us from the newspaper, we shouldn't ignore the significant difficulties they described during their interview regarding their time at the Navy Yard. Working in hazardous environments and with potentially harmful equipment, they occasionally collaborated with male coworkers who didn't think they were qualified for the position. They were supposed to shop, cook, clean, take care of the kids, and perform other household chores for women when they got home from their 8 or 9-hour shift.

due to labor shortages during the war, several defense firms welcomed these women to their workforce. Companies' attitudes on recruiting women were not all the same. Some corporations wanted to hire women to replace men who had joined the military. Other corporations, like as Ford, hired women out of necessity rather than interest. Society had varied feelings about women in war work, particularly housewives. Female workers were

frequently looked with mistrust and encouraged to prioritize their domestic and child care responsibilities above all else.

PROPAGANDA

In 1940 Americans also used propaganda to fuel up the the increase in wage war every companies and organisations be it governmental or nono governmental introduced their own type of propaganda to boost up the the shaping activities at homes and abroad. Office War Information (OWI) Significant tasks included combating enemy propaganda and ensuring that information reaching American citizens was truthful and supportive of the Allied cause. It tracked and responded to Axis propaganda while also spreading messages emphasizing the benefits of democracy and the evils of the Axis forces. During World War II, governments relied heavily on propaganda to mold public opinion, boost morale, and mobilize their populations. The propaganda of the time was multifarious, using posters, films, radio broadcasts, and pamphlets to deliver messages. Patriotism, the demonization of the enemy, the value of unity and sacrifice, and the promotion of war-related activities such as war bond purchases, rationing, and military enlistment were among the key themes of WWII propaganda.

Propaganda posters were among the most common and efficient forms of communication. These posters employed striking images and words to elicit powerful emotions and convey clear messages. For example, in the United States, posters contained themes such as "Loose Lips Sink Ships" to emphasize the value of caution in military matters, and "We Can Do It!" to urge women to enter the workforce. In the United Kingdom, posters such as "Keep Calm and Carry On" were created to boost public morale during the Blitz. Women were significant figures in wartime propaganda, both as subjects and actors in its creation and distribution. The image of women in propaganda was critical to rallying them for the war effort and altering cultural expectations. One of the most recognizable pictures of wartime propaganda is "Rosie the Riveter," a cultural icon depicting women who worked in factories and shipyards during the war. The "We Can Do It!" poster, showing Rosie, was created to encourage women to take up duties formerly performed by males who were now fighting overseas. This image, and others like it, helped to encourage a large number of women to enter the workforce, filling crucial positions in manufacturing, agriculture, and other war-related industries.

Women were also portrayed in propaganda as caretakers and homefront supporters. Posters and adverts encouraged women to store food, plant victory gardens, and take part in civil defense actions. These messages underlined the value of women's contributions to the war effort, both at work and at home. Furthermore, women actively contributed to the creation and dissemination of propaganda. Female journalists, filmmakers, and broadcasters sought to create content that would appeal to the public and boost morale. Women's organizations also helped promote war bond campaigns, organize community support activities, and disseminate government propaganda.

A WORLDWIDE RESPONSE

During World War II, women all around the world contributed significantly to the war effort. As millions of men were conscripted to fight, many countries' labor and social institutions had to adapt quickly, resulting in considerable changes to women's roles and duties. Their contributions were numerous, ranging from industrial and agricultural activities to direct military service.

In the United States, women worked in factories, shipyards, and other war-related businesses, a movement exemplified by the famous figure of "Rosie the Riveter." The Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) saw women operating in non-combat jobs that were important to military operations. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, women joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), where they did everything from secretarial work to operating anti-aircraft guns.

The Soviet Union experienced one of the most widespread mobilizations of women during the conflict. Soviet women served in both support and combat roles. Women served as snipers, pilots, and tank crew members, the most well-known of which were the Night Witches, a group of female pilots who performed nocturnal bombing missions. In Germany, women were conscripted into the labor force to replace men who had gone to the front, and many served in military auxiliary, though they were not directly involved in combat. Women played an important role in resistance movements in occupied countries and colonies. They collected intelligence, disrupted enemy operations, and aided Allied forces. In France, for example, women such as members of the French Resistance provided essential help in the battle against Nazi occupation.

NIGHT WITCHES

A well-known squad of female Soviet military aviators known as the "Night Witches" flew during World War II. From 1942 until the conclusion of the war, these women, officially known as the 588th Night Bomber Regiment, undertook missions of precision bombing and harassment against the German troops. The Polikarpov Po-2, a lightweight, two-seater biplane intended for training and crop-dusting, served as their main aircraft. Even though these planes were antiquated and sluggish, their wooden frames prevented enemy radar from picking them up, which let the Night Witches carry out their missions efficiently in the dark.

The bold tactics of the regiment won them the nickname "Night Witches" from the German soldiers, who were equally intimidated and impressed by them. The women would glide stealthily toward their targets while idling their engines. When they released their explosives, they produced a haunting "whooshing" sound that was similar to a witch's broomstick in flight. Even with their outdated aircraft and the tremendous risks they encountered, the Night Witches completed over 30,000 sorties and dropped over 23,000 tons of bombs.

ROYAL WAR EFFORTS

Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, made a significant contribution during World War II by entering the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). Her participation represented the wider mobilization of women in the UK, as well as the British royal family's devotion to the war effort. Princess Elizabeth enlisted in the ATS in February 1945, when she was 18 years old, and was trained as a technician and driver. She was assigned the service number 230873 and promoted to the rank of honorary junior commander, which was equivalent to captain.

Princess Elizabeth's choice to become a member of the ATS was noteworthy for various reasons. It emphasized the value of each person's contribution to the war effort and showed her support for the British people during a period of national distress. Her enlistment encouraged more women to enter the workforce and the armed forces by advancing the notion that they could take on demanding and unconventional positions. Princess Elizabeth acquired the necessary abilities for assisting military logistics and operations during her training, including the ability to operate and maintain a range of vehicles. Her work with the ATS was extensively reported, which raised spirits and made her a potent propaganda weapon.

It emphasized that everyone had a role to play in winning, regardless of social standing.

NURSES

These nurses have received training in providing in-flight medical care to injured soldiers during air evacuations. Their efforts were vital in guaranteeing that injured workers received prompt medical assistance while being transported. The increased patient load resulting from bombings and other war-related incidents was managed by civilian nurses in the UK in addition to military nurses. They dealt with wounds and public health emergencies brought on by the conflict while working in hospitals and community health settings. In field hospitals, medical trains, and on the front lines, Soviet women performed a great deal of nursing work. They frequently endured exceedingly difficult working circumstances and encountered the same risks as soldiers, such as bombings and enemy fire. Military nursing

services in Commonwealth nations, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, were staffed by nurses. They offered medical assistance in the Pacific, North Africa, and Europe, among other conflict zones. These nurses, who frequently collaborated with American and British medical professionals, were essential to the Commonwealth's medical support system. Japanese military nurses cared for injured soldiers in hospitals and aboard hospital ships while serving in the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. They also laboured in occupied areas, frequently under difficult circumstances. Civilian Efforts: By providing medical care for bombing casualties and other war-related disasters within Japan, Japanese civilian nurses made a valuable contribution to the war effort.

The role that nurses played in World War II was significant and varied. They not only delivered important medical care in incredibly difficult circumstances, but they also had a significant impact on public health and the morale of both soldiers and civilians. The war made a substantial contribution to the advancement of the nursing profession by raising awareness of the value of nurses' labor and talents. The foundation for post-war developments in healthcare and the global professionalisation of nursing was also established during this time.

CONCLUSION

The accomplishments of women throughout the war questioned gender norms and opened the door for increased equality in the years following the conflict. Women made a wide range of important and varied contributions to World War II, demonstrating their resilience, creativity, and capacity to lead during difficult times. Many of these women continued to work in the roles they had taken up during the conflict, leading to increased economic independence and opportunity for future generations. The battle had a profound effect on communities all around the world and was a turning point in the continuous struggle for women's equality. Working women faced several challenges during World War II, especially mothers.

Eleanor Roosevelt pushed her husband Franklin Delano Roosevelt to approve the Community Facilities Act of 1942, which established the first government childcare facilities in the United States, in order to meet women's dual duties as mothers and workers. In the end, 105,000 children were served by seven centers. The First Lady also encouraged business executives to offer childcare that is up to par. amenities for their staff members. However, these programs fell short of meeting working women's demand for childcare.

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GUL BASISTA

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