

# The Unsung Heroine of India's Freedom Struggle: A Constitutional Perspective on the Sacrifice of Neera Arya and Her Contemporary Relevance

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## Abstract

This research paper explores the life and struggle of Neera Arya, the first female spy of the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army). In an era dominated by patriarchal norms and colonial oppression, she prioritized 'National Interest' over 'Personal Ties.' This paper analyzes her actions through the lens of Fundamental Duties, Human Rights, and Feminist Theories within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

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## Keywords:

Neera Arya; Indian National Army (INA); Azad Hind Fauj; Rani of Jhansi Regiment; Women in Freedom Struggle; Female Espionage; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; Colonial Repression; Cellular Jail (Kala Pani); Human Rights Violations; Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 21 of the Indian Constitution; Fundamental Duties (Article 51A); Constitutional Morality; Feminist Theory; Gender and Nationalism; Patriarchal Resistance; Revolutionary Ethics; Doctrine of Necessity; Private Defence in Political Jurisprudence; Ethical Nationalism; Women in Defence Forces; Unsung Freedom Fighters; Nation First Ideology; Historical Invisibility.

## **Introduction: A Blazing Reality in the Pages of History**

The history of the Indian independence movement is not merely a chronicle of political treaties but a saga of unprecedented sacrifice. While many names are etched in gold, several others have faded into oblivion. Neera Arya (1898–1998) is one such name. Recognized as a soldier of the 'Rani of Jhansi Regiment' and a revolutionary who allegedly killed her own husband to protect Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, her life remains a testament to supreme patriotism.

## **Organizational Structure of Women in the Indian National Army (INA)**

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose did not establish the 'Rani of Jhansi Regiment' as a mere symbolic gesture; it was a disciplined military structure.

**Military Hierarchy:** Under the leadership of Dr. Lakshmi Sahgal, the regiment maintained ranks such as 'Commanders,' 'Captains,' and 'Sepoys.' Neera Arya was specifically recruited into the Intelligence Wing due to her strategic acumen.

**Rigorous Training:** In camps across Singapore and Rangoon, these women were trained in rifle handling, bayonet fighting, and map reading. Neera Arya excelled in guerrilla tactics and information gathering.

**Breaking Gender Roles:** While the British Army predominantly used women in auxiliary roles, the INA set a global precedent by deploying women on the frontlines of combat.

## **Torture in the Andaman and Human Rights: A Grim Reality**

Following the death of her husband, Neera Arya was arrested by the British and sent to the 'Cellular Jail' (Kala Pani) in the Andamans. Her ordeal there represents the pinnacle of colonial cruelty.

**Physical Torture:** According to historical accounts, when a blacksmith attempted to remove her shackles, he used a hammer to strike her chest brutally to break the rivets. She was subjected to such inhuman pain to extract the whereabouts of Netaji.

**Violation of Human Rights:** In a modern context, this was a blatant violation of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR) and the principles enshrined in Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) of the Indian Constitution.

**Prison Conditions:** Prisoners in Cellular Jail were treated worse than animals, forced to mill oil for hours and fed contaminated food. Neera Arya's resilience against such state-sponsored terror is unparalleled.

### **The Indian Constitution and Neera Arya: An Analytical Link**

Even before the Constitution was drafted, Neera Arya personified its core values:

**Fundamental Duties (Article 51A):** She lived the duty "to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so" long before it was codified in 1976.

**The Ethical Dilemma:** Legally, the killing of a spouse is a crime. However, under the doctrine of 'Necessity' and 'Private Defence' in international political jurisprudence, her act to save the head of the Provisional Government of Free India is categorized as a 'Revolutionary Act' rather than a common felony.

### **Contemporary Relevance**

**Women in Defense:** As India currently debates and implements permanent commissions for women in combat roles, Neera Arya stands as a pioneer who proved women's strategic and physical capabilities decades ago.

**Ethical Nationalism:** Post-independence, she refused a pension for a long time and lived a humble life selling flowers in Hyderabad. This 'Selfless Nationalism' is a vital lesson for today's generation.

**Governance and Integrity:** Her principle of "Nation First" serves as a moral compass for modern bureaucrats and political leaders.

## **Conclusion**

The biography of Neera Arya is not just a chapter of history but a living philosophy. The rights we enjoy under the Indian Constitution are built upon the sacrifices of unsung warriors like her. To transform the youth into conscious and dutiful citizens by drawing inspiration from her life is the truest tribute to her memory.

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