



Abha Maiti - A 'Lady with the Lamp' of Women Empowerment' during 20th Century's Challenging India (1923-1994)

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Abstract:

The recent world is an entrenched social sphere where life and livelihood domains have been dignifying as the male-dominated with time. Unfortunately, plan-policy-strategy and decision makings are traditionally done by males ignoring their better half so called in society. Although time has been changed with its advanced digital mass-momentum, society has remained standstill in its patriarchal envelop. Eventually, Indian histories of great women reflect the momentous contributions in a variety of dimension imprinting a long-lasting blow in the nation and globe. Women's legal, political, academic, socio-cultural, economic and technological practices and performances have been evidently altered in drastic and dramatic ways after independence in India.

Abha Maiti, a daughter of a remote village, Kalagachhia of Khejuri P.S. under Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal was a committed *freedom fighter*, *enthusiastic politician* and a *sanctified socialist* during British and Post-independent 20th century in India. She did not only serve own soil, but also her state and country for a long time. Having explicitly devoted to the ideals of Gandhism in her professional and private life, she was the admirable public figure from the challenging site and situation then. Both *leadership and motherhood* in behaving and activating in the fields have made her a triumphant public figure from an ardent daughter of the soil. But, changing colour complexity in politics and power, lacking the efforts from liable characters and authorities and ignorance to undermine the momentous history of personalities in region, such an *admirable figure* has been dropped down in the darks of culture.

Although, this time is on her birth centenary moment, a minute effort at local level by some of her followers and contributed organizations and institutions is observed rather than what should be celebrated at large scale. In this perspective, this intensive review and perception survey based paper attempts to enlighten this stirring life assessing the **Individual Woman Empowered Index (IWEI)** and **Personality Index (PAI)** whereas the unique struggling journey would be appreciable to the next generation as a distinct and empowered "*lady with the lamp*" to society and soil during the tough time.

Keywords: Abha Maiti, leadership and motherhood, admirable figure, IWEI, PAI and 'lady with the lamp'.

I. Introduction:

"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

- Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani female education activist & the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Heroes are people who have given their lives to something bigger than themselves. All of us face challenges. But how many of us don't give up and use those challenges to our advantage? Those who do, become an inspiration for all of us. Fortunately, the world has a lot of examples of such inspiring souls. There are some who stay silent and bear, then there are those who speak up and fight. Get inspired by the stories of these 'women of steel'.

In a country with the largest democracy where the goddesses are hailed and worshipped one might think women too are protected and enjoy safety. The reality is far from that. Women face problems on a daily basis that men cannot comprehend,

they are stared at by others and judged for their choice of clothes, behaviour and everything connected to them, at homes they are expected to be caretakers, mothers, cooks, nurses, a good wife, a daughter-in-law. It is so sad to see that so much inhuman and machine level expertise is expected from them and yet nobody is happy with them. They are ill-treated on roads, public transports, at the workplace and even in their own homes and personal relationships. The problems are many like dowry-related harassment, right from childhood young girls are neglected and not encouraged for personal growth which creates a weak foundation for their entire love. When girls from such toxic environments grow up they tolerate domestic violence, marital rape and even they do not speak up when they encounter abusive behaviour in a relationship. The problems are in every sphere of life for women and to stop that we have to be understanding of them.

Women are more compassionate and empathetic than men and that often is considered as a sign of weakness, men must realize patriarchy and the ego that does no good by women is not helping them either. Women have so many issues that we cannot articulate and they are facing so much without complaining so there should be a collective effort by everyone to support women if they have a problem and fight against the wrong-doers for justice and equality. And also encourage young girls to speak up if any issue arises without fear. Equality for work contribution and pay must be a norm and at home, men must also contribute to the domestic chores. There is still a long way to go but we can go when we take a step together.

Many doctrinal debates about the desirability of women's role in the public sphere were resolved by the national movement, which treated women as political beings capable of nationalist feelings and as, if not more, capable of struggle and sacrifice than men. If women could march in processions, defy laws, and go to jail without being accompanied by male family members, they could aspire to work, vote, and possibly inherit parental property.

India has a rich history of great women who have made significant contributions to various fields and have left a lasting impact on the country and world. Since independence, women's legal, political, educational, and social status have changed noticeably in some radical and dramatic ways. This was not shocking or surprising that the subject of improving as well as advanced civilizing women's status had been at the forefront of the social reform movement since Ram Mohan Roy began questioning social orthodoxy in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the freedom struggle, which began in the 1920s and intensified in the 1930s, drew heavily on the creative energies of Indian women.

From the 1920s onwards, women's political participation in massive popular struggles opened up new vistas of possibilities that a century of social reform could not. In the nineteenth century, the woman was portrayed as a victim of injustice, then as an ardent supporter of nationalist men in the early twentieth century and finally as a comrade in the 1930s and 1940s. The women fighters of Midnapur played a heroic role during the movement. This time they were three in one: they were trained active fighters, they were dependable supporters and they were sincere sympathizers who acted as coverages for the male fighters and volunteers. They were those women who gave shelter to fighter- volunteers, gave them food and nursed them in cases of their injury. And if it so required they went out in groups with their vegetable- cutters and long daggers against the British police. They were very particular to defend themselves against any sort of molestation. It is a pity that they could not defend themselves in all cases from the torture of the police and of other miscreants. Yet they did not lose heart. Yet it was their love for the country, and desire to make Mother India free from the clutches of the foreign Tatars that impelled them, nay prompted them to respond to the call of the nation. It was their vow 'Do or Die' i. e. 'karo eya mara', in other words 'finish the firingness to make your country free', and if this vow can not be realized, then face a spiritual death at the altar of the nation and inspire others to proceed on and on towards the golden dawn of a free India. [13]

There are very few notable women leaders who have made their footprint in the regional and national political arena and Abha Maity is undoubtedly one of those names. The Bengal's first longest serving woman political character from 1947 to 1991, Abha Maiti was the most admired for her iron-fisted approach and bold governance style who was elected a lot of times as the M.L.A. and M.P. for different political parties from different soils throughout the region in Bengal. This shows us the reign of almost equal length in every time. In each, it was the same personality in office and works. She was no doctrinaire figure or captive to wisdom or ideas inherited from her father. She changed and evolved, sometimes for the better. The legacy of her is an indelible impression in the region of politics. She set high standards for other women leaders across the state and nation. Her success exhibits to us the eminence of taking advantage of your surroundings and not letting your gender define you. It is not only significant to talk about the stories of women in leadership, it is imperative. The life of Abha Maiti is a story that inspires a whole generation of women to strive and achieve success by breaking the glass ceiling. She had a fine sense of humour. At work, she had a total mastery of her own self, and this meant not only keeping cool but also composed. All through her life, letters meant a lot to Abha, especially during her childhood. They were a sought of personal touch with fellow human beings, each with a human need and human feeling which was yet another admirable

quality about Abha Maiti. We cannot attempt a better summing up of 'Abha Maiti' than quote "...She never let her intellectual aesthetic or human sensitiveness be blunted... she had a certain ability to descend gracefully from the high peaks of statesmanship and political, strategic preoccupations to minute personal details about anyone with whom she happened to come into contact."

Each stage of the life of 'Abha Maiti', this extraordinary Indian represented a new stage of her political evolution – as a young graduate and law student drawn to the freedom struggle; as the leader of not only of soil, but also of state and nation started her Gandhian philosophical practices amongst refugees, the most marginalised sections of society (specifically tribal community), disaster affected people, women and child and also the trivial farmers; whereas in post-Independence India, her life as a member of the Congress Party and the Janta Dal, years that saw her in campaigns for political, economic and social justice.

Hence, the life story of Abha Maiti is that of grit, courage along with the unwavering and steadfast believes in doing well for others. This 'woman of steel' with motherhood has inspired us to be brave and never let anyone or anything stops us for being the best version of ourselves. Hence, I salute her undying spirit. Luckily, we are the parceners of the moment of Abha Maiti Birth Centenary Celebration. But, unfortunately, we, the present and foremost generations are not with the sufficient knowledge regarding learnable and inspiring life and life work of this monumental public figure. Whereas the recent politics and political exercises are increasingly being featured by the cruelty, crime and corruption rather than the organizational or institutional ethics, formality, morality, honesty and integrity; the social workers are habituated with the advertisement to be popularize in different ways staying far from cordial helps; such an admirable character may be the way to be forward in near and far future. Here lies the essence of this study.

II. 'A-B-H-A' as the 'Lady with the Lamp' in the Name and Fame:

Terminologically 'Abha', the name may be significantly analysed by the lens of new sense womanhood having admirable brilliant hearty life or voice alongwith daughterhood, motherhood, leadership, warriorhood and life learning aspects.

Admirable-Brilliant-Heartiest-Ava:

- ❖ *A=Admirable*
- ❖ *B=Brilliant*
- ❖ *H=Heartiest/ Hearty*
- ❖ *A=Ava (Life/ Voice)*

From 'Nandarani' to 'Abha', later on popularized as 'Abha Di' (Sister Abha), 'Abha Devi' 'Jewel Woman', 'Bravo Lady' and so many other appellation and epithets, today 'Abha Maiti' is not a name only, but an epitome of all the attributes mentioned above.

Life, the LIGHT of spirituality, astuteness, intelligence, and excellent workings are all signs of the emblematic personality of the lamp. Lamps can also be a doorway to other horizons. Brings safeguard against dim demons, and can be the enlightenment of the strength of mind. In the rationalization of site and situation, the periodic pulse and location and level of women in society, development and environment Abha maiti is a renowned figure having her fate-fortune journey. But, throughout her conducts of behaving, interacting, walking, integrating and working she was the special empowered persona had enlightened the pathway for others to be developed and advanced and also become a struggler as champ. Where space and time, both were of impossibility to be empowered from women's' sphere, she was with the admirable brilliant hearty Ava like the lady with the lamp of challenging empowerment during British and Post-Independent India of 20th Century.

III. Objectives of the Study:

Under the dusk strength of black-white knowledge about this great personality, this paper aims:

- To know the journey of the admirable life of this superb lady;
- To enlighten the dignity and distinction of this land's daughter as the public figure;
- To show her versatile brilliance in politics and power;
- To review the admirable charitable works of of Abha Maiti as the Social Activist;

- To assess this Soulful Lady with the Lamp of Women Empowerment through the justification of Individual Woman Empowered Index (IWEI) and Personality Index (PAI) analysis.

IV. Methods and Methodology:

Table 1: Methods and Methodology for the Study

Major Phases	Major Stages	Major Methods	Major Techniques
Pre-field/ Pre-action Phase	Thinking and Preparing Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking about the fact and understanding its core-content and relevance in time Fixation of the topic aiming the specific purposes Formulation of the methodological framework for the study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Survey regarding the fact Selection and statement of Problem/ fact Formulation of objectives and methodology Individual and organizational sampling for interview and survey
	Reviewing Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offline & on spot literature searching Online/ web based literature investigation Collecting and gathering the available literatures Sortening and shortening the collected literatures Cultivating the organized literatures & finding out the literature gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source, site and chain searching for existed literatures Extensive and intensive literature review Citation and reference searching and review
Field/ Ground Truth Justification Phase	Surveying Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Survey Organizational and institutional survey Historical documentary survey Individual specific interview cum survey Participant and perception survey for personality assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library survey Officio survey Participant survey Perception survey Organization/ institution survey Personnel survey/ interview
Post-field/ Analytical Phase	Analyzing and Assessing Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-organization of collected and organized data or information Analysis of the relevant data/ information balancing with the ground truth Personality assessment of public figure Interpretation as per analysis and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-organization with data/ information with proper coding, editing and cross-checking Qualitative Analysis of the organized data/ information Personality Index Assessment Individual Women Empowered Index Assessment
	Concluding Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing the draft paper/ article on the great personality Finalizing the article drawing the concluding remarks with proper justification of character, site and situation in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the findings layout and concluding framework Report writing
Source: Author's Own Compilation			

Table 2: Nature and Categories of the Sampled Respondents for the Perception Survey				
Sl. No.	Nature of Sampled Respondents	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents	Remarks on Sampling
1.	Relatives	03	5.08	Purposive Sampling
2.	Older and experienced people of home ground	06	10.17	
3.	Freedom fighters alive till date	02	3.39	
4.	Socio-political colleagues alive till date	12	20.34	Chunk Sampling
5.	Present local and regional supporters/ workers having same political ideology	08	13.56	Systematic & Stratified Random Sampling
6.	Present local and regional political workers having anti-political ideology	08	13.56	
7.	Local and regional book/ magazine authors working and writing on her	09	15.25	Purposive & Chunk Sampling
8.	Experienced characters from contributed institutions	07	11.86	
9.	Other Institutional and public characters	04	6.78	
		N=59	100	

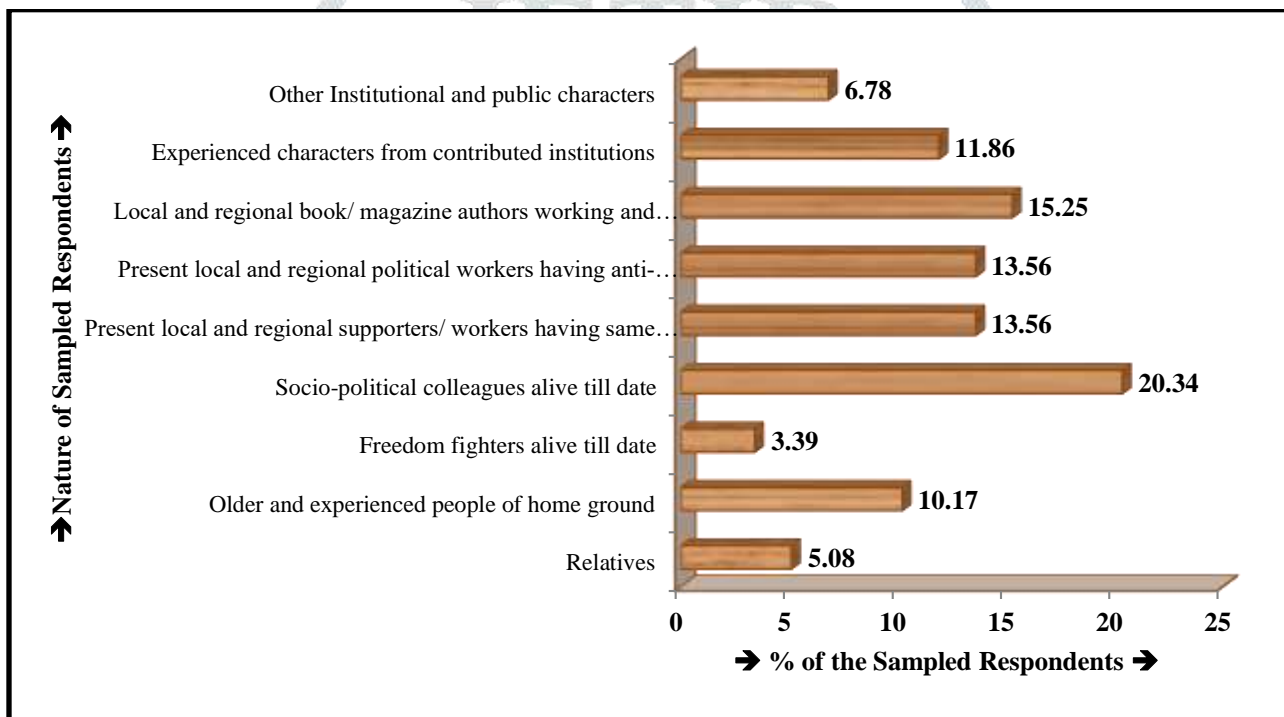


Figure 1: Nature and Categories of the Sampled Respondents for the Perception Survey

V. Schematically Review of the Life and Life Works of Abha Maiti:

5.1 'Abha' in and on the Family Tree:

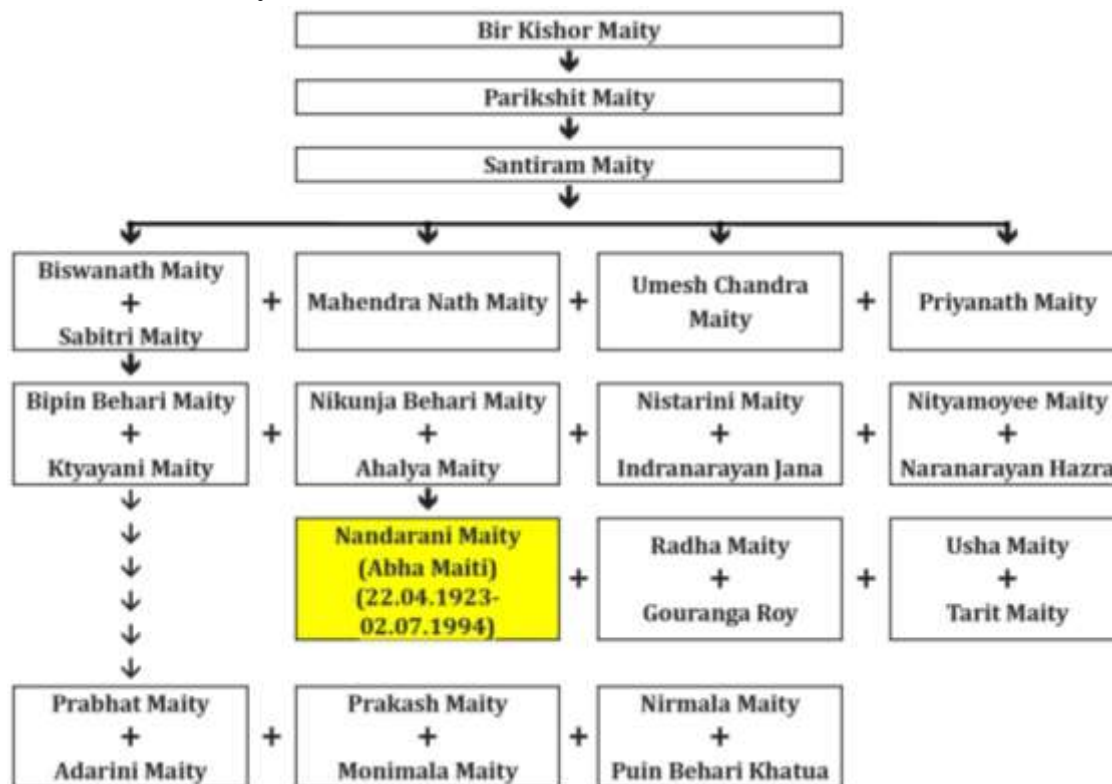


Figure 2: Family Tree of Smt. Abha Maiti

Source: 'Medinipurer Agnikanya'-Abha Maitiir Jibani o Karma: Pranamya Abha (S. K. Bala & S. Maity, 2023) [3]

5.2 Education and Challenging Academic Life:

Table 3: Education and Challenging Academic Life

Year/ Period	Degree	Site	Situation
In and around 1930	Primary Education	Primary School at Home Place, Kalagachia	Childhood experience with freedom fighting activities and social work from the struggler parents
1937	Admission in Seventh Class	Bethun Female School, Calcutta	After completion of 2 nd Civil Disobedience Movement, father Nikunja Behari Maity joined Fatepur Shreenath Institution as Headmaster in 1934.
1940	Matriculation in private	Near 'Sharisha Ramkrishna Ashram/ Mission', 24 Parganas (Malay Bhawan)	Father Nikunja Behari Maity was arrested for six months in 1940 due to civil disobedience at Manglamaro market in Potashpur Police Station.
1942	I.A. in private	Barabari village in Bhagwanpur P.S. (In the house of Kamdeb Mondal)	With the special help and assistance of Tarapada Maity, Teacher of Sarisha Saradamani Girls School (later on Headmaster of Mugberia Gangadhar High School)
1943-1944	Undergraduate (UG): B.A.	Bethun Womens' College, Calcutta	Study and parallel volunteered activities in freedom fight and social works both
1947	Bachelor of Legislative Law (LLB)	Calcutta University, Calcutta	

Source: [2], [3], [7], [9], [10], [13], [14], [18], [19], [20], [23], [29], [33] & [39]

5.3 In born Struggler and Contribution in Freedom Fight of the Nation:

Table 4: Struggling Women & Contribution as the Freedom Fighter

Year	Contributing Areas	Remarks
1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Women Education Centre regarding freedom movement, politics and social works at the age on nine (1932) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student in Primary Education
1930's Decade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In contact with famous freedom fighter and another renowned lady, Sarojini Naidu at that time 	
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active involvement in Quit India Movement-1942 in Undivided Midnapore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I.A. student
1940's Decade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements in Undivided Midnapore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in the capturing of Khejuri P.S. Movement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receptionist and voluntary member for welcoming and care taking Mahatma Gandhi at Kanthi (Contai) in 1945 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Law student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to again and again arrest situation of freedom fighter father Nikunja Behari Maity, family responsibility was mostly on her and side by side she was frequently engaged in different freedom fighting activities and also participated in different social works like providing the help and relief to the victims and affected people during devastating flood, sea storms, cyclones and surges calamities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate and Law student respectively

Source: [2], [3], [7], [9], [10], [13], [14], [17], [18], [19], [20], [23], [25], [29], [33], [39], [41] & [42]

5.4 Abha Maiti in the Politics and Power and Her Struggling Political Life:

Table 5: Political Woman and Political Life with Leadership

1948: Member of West Bengal Pradesh Congress	1952: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women welfare, Expansion of education, establishment of school, Arrangement of agricultural loan for farmers through the rejuvenation of Rural Cooperatives (Gramin Samabay Samiti), Expansion of rural drainage and irrigation through test relief, Development of transport system and renovation and reconstruction of rural paths/ roads, Increasing the working opportunity for labour force, Effort to increase the scope of employment opportunity for unemployee, Well establishment for drinking water in terms of health security, Emphasizing ti the establishment of hospital, etc.
1952-1958: Secretary, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Women Committee	
1952: Member, Nikhil Bharat Congress Committee	
1952: MLA: Winning from Khejuri-Bhagwanpur United Assembly Constituency from the ticket of Congress Party	
1957: Defeating in the election and more concentration in party work to strengthen the organization	She was defeated to Basanta Kumar Panda, Contestant Candidate from P.S.P.
1957: General Secretary of Nikhil Bharat Congress Working Committee & President of Midnapore Zilla (District) Congress	
1960-1962: Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (3 April 1960 – 4 March 1962)	1960-1962: Member of Congress Working Committee & General Secretary, Nikhil Bharat Congress Committee
1962: MLA: Winning from Bhagwanpur Assembly Constituency from the ticket of Congress Party	She defeated Basanta Kumar Das, the contestant/ candidate from P.S.P.
1967: MLA: Winning from Bhagwanpur Assembly Constituency from the ticket of Congress Party	1967: She defeated Amalesh Jana, the contestant/ candidate from Bangla Congress & she was contributed from the party by Minister of Refugee and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal/ Chief Minister: Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy
1969: MLA: Winning from Bhagwanpur Assembly Constituency at the intermediate election from the ticket of Congress Party	She defeated Banabehari Maity, the contestant/ candidate from Bangla Congress
1971: Breaking into the National Congress Party and defeating in the parliamentary election at Kanthi Parliamentary Constituency	She was defeated to Samar Guha, Contestant Candidate from P.S.P.
1972: Defeating in the assembly election at Nandigram Assembly Constituency	She was defeated to Bhupal Chandra Panda, Contestant Candidate from C.P.I.
1977: Member, Janata Dal/ Party	
1977–1980: Member of Parliament (MP): Winning from, Panskura Parliament Constituency from the ticket of Janata Party	She defeated Dr. Fulrenu Guha, the contestant/ candidate from Congress Party and was contributed by Janata Party by Minister of State for Industry (12 August 1977 – 1979) under the Cabinet of Morarji Desai, Prime Minister
	Heart and soul effort to establish Salt Manufacturing Industry at Kanthi. But failed this effort due to collapsing the government for

	political instability
1980: Coming in the contact of Lok Nayak Joyprakash Narayan, Indian independence activist, theorist, socialist and political leader and becoming the President, Janata Dal/ Party of West Bengal	
1980: Defeating in the parliamentary election at Panskura Parliamentary Constituency from the ticket of Lok Janata Dal (Party)	She was defeated to Geeta Mukherjee, Contestant Candidate from C.P.I.
1987: Joining in the Indian National Congress responding in the call of Rajiv Gandhi	
1987: President of Midnapore Zilla/ District Congress and Vice-President of Provincial Congress of West Bengal	
1989: Defeating in the parliamentary election at Kanthi Parliamentary Constituency from the ticket of National Congress Party	She was defeated to Sudhir Giri, Contestant Candidate from C.P.I.
1991: Defeating in the parliamentary election at Kanthi Parliamentary Constituency from the ticket of National Congress Party	She was defeated again to Sudhir Giri, Contestant Candidate from C.P.I.
• No more competitor in any election	
Source: [1], [2], [3], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [14], [15], [18], [19], [25], [29], [33], [35] & [41]	

5.5 Abha Maiti as a Charitable Woman in Public Walk and Social Work:

Table 6: Charitable Woman in Public Walk and Social Work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lead Character for the Development of Underdeveloped, Deprived and Discriminated Community ❖ Vice-Chairperson, Consumer Action Forum, West Bengal ❖ Vice-Chairperson, Women Coordinating Council, India ❖ Lead Character for Child and Women Welfare ❖ President, National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Association and Club of India 	
1942: Vital volunteer role in rescue and relief activities of management process of tremendous cyclonic disaster and related sea surges & sea flood (1942)	
1948: Offstage role in the establishment and development of Thakurnagar Nanda Mahila Vidyalaya, Purba Medinipur (Since her father was the first Education Minister and regional leader cum social activist then.)	
1954: Active role and responsibility for Women Welfare in Medinipur Anti-Dividing Movement under Pradesh Congress Rajya Simana Upasamiti	
1956-57: She voiced strongly for the coalition of Bengal-Bihar in self of the rehabilitation of huge refugees from East Pakistan. But, it was failed for defeating of Congress Party in re-election in North-east Calcutta.	
1962-1969: Minister of Refugee and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active role in the solution of major problems in Andaman, Dandkaranya, Nadia, Hooghly, 24-Parganas, etc. • Enhanced efforts and activation for the development of housing, drinking water, education, public health and employment, • Remarkable role and responsibility for tribal welfare, • Initiative to establish of Dumar Dari Basic School • Establishment of Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya (1964) • Leading role in the construction of Narghat Bridge (Matangini Setu) over Haldi River and also Khudiram Bridge over Kalinagar Khal/ River with the active help from Land Reform and Revenue Minister, Shyamadas Bhattacharya • Foundation Stone of Bhattar College, Dantan being laid by Smt. Abha Maiti the founder President of College Governing Body on 05.12.1963 • Background efforts and initiative in the establishment of Kanthi/ Contai (1968) and Jhargram Polytechnic (1957) (Reference: Shailaja Das) 	
1962: Great efforts in collecting the donation from root level for making the relief fund in self of affected and victimized scared soldiers at the boundary during attacking by China on India in 1962	
1963: Leading role in the collection of Rs. 125000/- money for the relief fund by Education and Welfare Charitable Trust with respect to terrible flood in Bihar	
1969: Leading role as the public figure in the emergent situation of Bhagwanpur and Patshpur regions due to flood eroding the Keleghai River Bank	
1992: Praiseful activation and involvement in saving the communal harmony and also in relief distribution and reconstruction at unstable Metiaburuj areas during Babri Mosque breaking and controversy.	
Leading role in the celebration of Golden Jubilee of Quit India Moment by initiatives from Medinipur Sammilani	
Leading role in the celebration of Diamond Jubilee of Fire Age of Midnapore by initiatives from Medinipur Sammilani	
Source: [1], [2], [3], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [14], [15], [18], [19], [25], [26], [27], [29], [33], [34], [35], [37], [41] & [43]	

Table 7: Charitable Woman in contact with Major Wise, Philosophic and Talented Characters

In born (genetically)	Grandfather: Biswanath Maity: Teacher and distinguished personality in the background of education, culture, social work and patriotism throughout the region. (First Education Minister of West Bengal, MP of both Rajyasobha and Loksobha)	
	Father: Nikunja Behari Maity: Reputed teacher, freedom fighter, nation's server, tactical and successful politician and social worker	
	Mother: Ahalya Devi: Freedom fighter and social worker	
Academic Life:	Many of local and regional level freedom fighters and social activists	
	Freedom fighter and social activist Sashi Bhushan Bhowmik (1932)	
	Bhimacharan Patra, Freedom fighter and social worker (1942)	
	Nation's Father Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi/ Mahatma Gandhi (December, 1945)	
Struggling Life for Freedom	'The Nightingale of India' Sarojini Naidu: Political activist, feminist, poet and freedom fighter (1948-49)	
	• Nikunja Behari Maity (father)	• Swami Purushottomananda Abadhut (1932)
	• Ahalya Devi (mother)	• Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi (30 th December-2 nd January, 2045)
	• Sashi Bhushan Bhowmik & Sulochona Bhowmik (1932)	• Sarojini Naidu
	• Nibaran Dasgupta(1932)	• Birendra Nath Sasmal
	• Prafulla Chandra Sen (1932)	• Bipin Behari Bhowmik
	• Panchanan Basu (1932)	• Other more regional freedom fighters
	• Bijoy Kumar Bhattacharya (1932)	• Etc.
Political Life:	• Nikunja Behari Maity (father), Sashi Bhushan Bhowmik (1932), Atulya Ghosh, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Dr. Prafull Chandra Ghosh, Prafulla Chandra Sen, Morarji Desai, Jayprakash Narayan (Lok Nayak/ People's Leader), Indian independence activist, theorist, socialist and political leader, Sushil Kumar Dhar, etc.	

Source: [1], [2], [3], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [14], [15], [18], [19], [25], [27], [29], [33], [34], [35], [37], [41] & [43]

5.6 Abha Maiti - From Politics to Power: The Lady with Chair – The Role to Empower:**Table 8: From Politics to Power: The Lady with Chair – The Role to Empower**

Years/ Periods	Position/ Roles in Politics and Power	
1952–1957	• Member of the Legislative Assembly, Khejuri Constituency	
3 April 1960 – 4 March 1962	• Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha	
1962-1969	Member of the Legislative Assembly, Bhagbanpur Constituency (1962, 1967 & 1969) & Minister of Refugee and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal under the cabinet of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Chief Minister: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active role in the solution of major problems in Andaman, Dandkaranya, Nadia, Hooghly, 24-Parganas, etc. • Enhanced efforts and activation for the development of housing, drinking water, education, public health and employment, • Remarkable role and responsibility for tribal welfare, • Establishment of Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya (1964) • Leading role in the construction of Narghat Bridge (Matangini Setu) over Haldi River • Foundation Stone of Bhatler College, Dantan being laid by Smt. Abha Maiti the founder President of College Governing Body on 05.12.1963 • Presidential Role in Raja Narendralal Womens' College, Midnapore • Leading character in the establishment or development of Thakurnagar Nanda Mahila Vidyapith, Dasagram Satishchandra Shiksha Sadan, Khejuri Balichak Balika Vidyalaya, Dakshin Kalamdan Board Primary School, Bajbajia Iswar Chandra Shiksha Niketan Minor, Barabari High School, Bajkul Janakalyan Vidyanyiketan, etc. 	
1977–1980	Member of Parliament (MP): Winning from, Panskura Parliament Constituency from the ticket of Janata Party & Minister of State for Industry (12 August 1977 – 1979) under the cabinet of Morarji Desai, Prime Minister	• Heart and soul effort to establish Salt Manufacturing Industry at Kanthi. But failed this effort due to collapsing the government for political instability

Source: [1], [2], [3], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [14], [15], [18], [19], [25], [27], [29], [33], [34], [35], [37], [41] & [43]

5.7 Abha Maiti - From Organization to Management: The Lady with Chair – The Role to Empower**Table 9: From Organization to Management: The Lady with Chair – The Role to Empower**

	President of Bangiya Mahishya Samiti
27 th February, 1993: Establishment of of Medinipur Sammilani at Chourangi YMC, Calcutta	Founder President of Medinipur Sammilani
2 nd September, 1993: Contai/ Kanthi Brach, Medinipur Sammilani	Presidential role in the Celebration of Golden Jubilee of Quit India Movement at Sisir Mancha and Diamond Jubilee in the Exhibition Hall of Information Department/ Tathya Daptar
13-15 th February, 1994:	Presidential role in the Celebration of Golden Jubilee of Quit India Movement and Azad Hind Sarkar in Birendra Smriti Hall, Contai
17 th December, 1992: President of Medinipur Swadhinota Sngam Itihas Samiti	Publication of “Swadhinata Sangrame Medinipur”, Volume-III (1935-1947)
1949: Secretary, ‘Satyagraha’ Journal/ Magazine	
1958: Joint Secretary, Khadi Centre of West Bengal	Strong activation and great Contribution in Khadi Industry Development under the Khadi Centre of West Bengal
Chairman, ‘Juger Dak’, Magazine	
1978: Published Book: ‘Somaj o Nari’/ ‘Society & Women’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the state and status of women in society and nation • Highlighting the women right in the needs for women empowerment • Emphasizing the probable pathways for way-out from the woman related issue in time
1986-1994: President of Medinipur Swadhinata Sangram Itihas Samiti	
1993-1994: President of Medinipur Sammilani	
Vice-Chairman, Consumer Action Forum	
Vice-Chairman, Women Coordinating Council	
1 st Speaker of “Bidyarthider Asar” in ‘Akashbani’ introduced by Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy	
Source: [1], [2], [3], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [14], [15], [17], [18], [19], [25], [27], [28], [29], [32], [33], [34], [35], [37], [41], [42] & [43]	

Table 10: Functioning of Great Worker and Travelling abroad

Europe	America	East Asia	South-east Asia
England, Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, Finland, etc.	United States of America and Canada	Japan and Hong Kong	Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, etc.
Source: [1], [2], [3], [43]			

Table 11: Names/ Appellations/ Epithets throughout the Life and Based on Her Life Works

Names/ Appellations/ Epithets	Given by
‘Nandarani’	Grandfather: Biswanath Maity
‘Abha’	Cousin: Pratap Chandra Jana
‘Medinipurer Agnikanya’	Public Identity
‘Jewel Woman’	Morarji Desai, Former Prime Minister of India
“Amar Didi”	Doctor Usha Maity (Younger Sister)
“Ananya Abha”	Dr. Rasbehari Paul & Dr. Haripada Maity
‘Nanda’/ ‘Priya Chhota Bon’	Gita Rani Paul, Wife of Dr. Dr. Rasbehari Paul
Maid of Midnapore (Medinipurer Kumari)	News Papers
“Congress Sanskritir Jibanta Protimurti” (Essay)	Nilamani Raut Roy (Pratimantri, Food Supply Department, Orissa)
“Abha Di”	Colleagues and friends in political and social work life
‘Birangana Abha Maiti’	Pulin Behari Mandal, Political and Social Activist
‘Priya Netri’	Biraj Mohan Das, Freedom Fighter
‘Byaktitwamoyee Abha’	Bijoy Singh Nahar, Cabinet Colleague & Public Leader
‘Amader Abha Di’	Priyaranjan Das Munsu, Popular Congress Leader & Former Cabinet Minister
‘Kanthir Sangrami Kanya’	Samar Guha, M.P., Professor & Authour
‘Asadharan Manabik Bodh Sampanna Mahila’	Manindra Mohan Chakraborty, Ex-VC & Ghosh Professor of Chemistry Department, Calcutta University
‘Netri’	Pulin Behari Mondal, National Teacher, Leading Academician and Social Worker
Source: [1], [2], [3], [43]	

VI. Assessment of the Empowered Index of Abha Maiti to estimate Her Excellence and Uniqueness:

6.1 Assessment of the Empowered Index of Abha Maiti (1923-1994) to estimate her excellence and uniqueness with respect to the timely site and situation:

Table12: Assessment of the Women Empowered Index of Abha Maiti (1923-1994) to estimate her excellence and uniqueness with respect to the timely site and situation									
Sl. No.	Major dimensions emphasized in empowered women	Quality Assessment on 25-Point Rating Scale having 4-value for each point (as per 5-Point Likert Scale)				Average Rating as per mean valuation of (A) and (B) based on the feedback from 96-heads		Individual Women Empowered Index (IWEI) (%)	
		(A) Perception of the respondents experienced with the appearance and activities of Abha Maiti (N=59)		(B) Rating from reviewed documentary articles of on Abha Maiti by various authors/ researchers (N=37)					
		Abha Maiti	Common Women then	Abha Maiti	Common Women then	Abha Maiti	Common Women then	Abha Maiti	Common Women then
1.	Sense of self-worth: self-esteem/ self-respect, self-care, self-confident and self-development	3.3	0.9	3.7	1.1	3.50	1.00	84 (Women with Empowerment and Uniqueness)	24 (Women with Negligible Empowerment and Poor Status)
2.	Purpose driven & empathic	3.1	0.8	3.4	1.1	3.25	0.95		
3.	Being personable and approachable	3.4	0.9	3.6	1.2	3.50	1.05		
4.	Ability to determine own choice	3.5	0.9	3.8	1.3	3.65	1.10		
5.	Right to have access to opportunities and resource	2.9	1.0	3.1	1.2	3.00	1.10		
6.	Right to have power to control own lives within and outside home	3.4	0.9	3.9	1.0	3.65	0.95		
7.	Ability to influence the direction of social change (social intelligence)	3.2	1.0	3.7	1.4	3.45	1.20		
8.	Being confident public speaker and public figure	3.1	0.7	3.6	0.9	3.35	0.80		
9.	Availability, adaptability, absorbency, integrity and sincerity	3.0	0.8	3.5	1.1	3.25	0.95		
10.	Attitude, thinking and activities towards to be developed, to do develop and having with development	3.2	1.1	3.7	1.1	3.45	1.1		
11.	Having a sense of connectedness and kindness	3.3	0.9	3.7	1.2	3.50	1.05		
12.	Employing strength when dealing with others	2.8	0.7	3.3	0.9	3.05	0.80		

13.	Leadership in promoting gender equality	3.2	0.7	3.5	0.8	3.35	0.75		
14.	Effort and activation towards equivalent opportunity, inclusion and non-discrimination	3.1	0.8	3.6	0.9	3.35	0.85		
15.	Thinking and activating for wellbeing, safety and freedom from violence	3.1	1.2	3.4	1.5	3.25	1.35		
16.	Orientation in education and training enterprise development - schooling and training	3.0	0.9	3.6	1.3	3.3	1.10		
17.	Community Leadership and Engagement	3.2	0.8	3.7	1.1	3.45	0.95		
18.	Transparency, Straightforwardness, Measuring and Reporting	3.3	0.7	3.7	1.0	3.5	0.85		
19.	Being decision maker, strategy designer, challenge taker and problem solver	3.1	0.7	3.4	0.9	3.25	0.80		
20.	Roles in enterprise development and promoting the system	2.9	0.6	3.4	0.7	3.15	0.65		
21.	Daughterhood, brotherhood and motherhood in the livelihood and leadership	3.3	1.6	3.7	1.9	3.5	1.75		
22.	Role and responsibility in politics and power	3.3	0.7	3.8	0.9	3.55	0.80		
23.	Role and responsibility in administration, organization and management	3.1	0.5	3.6	0.8	3.35	0.65		
24.	Contribution in soil to nation	2.8	0.7	3.5	0.9	3.15	0.80		
25.	Overall Distinctness and Uniqueness in life and life works	3.0	0.6	3.5	0.9	3.25	0.75		
	Mean	3.14	0.84	3.58	1.08	3.36	0.96		
Interpretative Remarks on Individual Women Empowered Index (IWEI)									
Value (%)	0-20	20-40	40-60	60-80	80-100				
Remarks	Very Poor	Very Poor to Poor	Traditional to Good	Good to Very Good	Very Good to Absolute				
	No Empowerment	Negligible Empowerment	Moderate to Emerging Empowerment	Sufficient/ Satisfied Empowerment	Very Satisfied to Absolute Empowerment				
Source: Perception Survey (2023) on the older people experienced with the appearance and activities of Abha Maiti & Database or articles of 37- distinguished regional and national figure/ authors									

The above database (table 12) has been formulated based on the theoretical approach regarding the criteria of women empowerment and the attributes to be empowered woman in society. To assess the degree and magnitude of the empowerment of Abha Maiti and timely women, the perception survey on older people experienced with the appearance

and activities of Abha Maiti and then women has been conducted as per purposive random sampling technique. In fact, 59 older people have responded in this regard whereas as per literature review and analysis of 37-authors or academicians their documentary perceptions have been estimated here also. 25-point criteria have been emphasized to evaluate the state and status of not only Abha Maiti, but also contemporary women in rural Bengal. Following the qualitative 5-Point Likert Scale technique, rating of the criteria having 4-value for each has been done and finally IWEI has been enumerated. IWEI for Abha Maiti has been determined as 84% while this is only 24% for the women during her life span. The result significantly draws the notable empowered level for 'Abha' where it was very poor for other women having negligible women empowerment. Hence, this analysis depicts the distinctness of Abha maiti rather than average other woman community of midst and late middle of 20th century.

6.2 Personality Assessment Index of Abha Maiti (1923-1994) to estimate Her Personality as the Public Figure having various attributes

Table 13: Personality Assessment Index of Abha Maiti (1923-1994) to estimate Her Personality as the Public Figure having various attributes					
Sl. No.	Major dimensions emphasized in empowered women	Personality Assessment on 10-Point Rating Scale having 10-value for each point (as per 5-Point Likert Scale)		Average Rating as per mean valuation of (A) and (B) based on the feedback from 96-heads	Personality Assessment Index (PAI) (%)
		(A) Perception of the older people experienced with the appearance and activities of Abha Maiti (N=59)	(B) Rating from reviewed documentary articles of distinguished regional and national figure on Abha Maiti (N=37)		
1.	Self-worth	7.90	8.65	8.275	PAI = 77.75
2.	Appearance, Likeability & Approachability	7.64	8.32	7.980	
3.	Liberty & Freedom	7.78	8.12	7.950	
4.	Ability and Performance in Decision Making	7.45	7.98	7.715	
5.	Leadership in Politics & Power	7.64	8.27	7.955	
6.	Leadership in Administration & Management	6.89	7.78	7.335	
7.	Entrepreneurship & Leadership in Organization	6.47	7.45	6.960	
8.	Charitability and Social Work	7.32	8.12	7.720	
9.	Daughterhood, Brotherhood and Motherhood in the Livelihood and Leadership	7.78	8.65	8.215	
10.	Resilience & Sustainability	7.21	8.08	7.645	
	Mean	7.41	8.14	7.775	
Interpretative Remarks on Personality Assessment Index (PAI)					
Value (%)	0-25	25-50	50-75	75-100	
Remarks	Very Poor to Poor	Poor to Moderate	Moderate to Good	Good to Very Good	
	Deprived Personality	Traditional Personality	Traditional to Good Personality	Inspiring and Ideal Personality with Distinctness and Uniqueness	
Source: Perception Survey (2023) on the older people experienced with the appearance and activities of Abha Maiti & Database or articles of 37- distinguished regional and national figure/ authors					

PAI or Personality Assessment Index is another measure to assess quality and credit of any public figure. Same qualitative statistical technique has been applied here like IWEI analysis. But, instead of 25-point criteria only 10-point

criteria have been justified here based on the perceptions of field and literature conclusions. From the data analysis (table 13) it is seen that estimated PAI is 77.75% for Abha Maiti, this public figure. This dignified value shows her uniqueness and excellence from all points of view. Hence, 'ABHA' is really reflected as the epitome of women empowerment and great personality in one envelop.

VII. Concluding Remarks – Last, But Not Least Words:

The world we live in is an ingrained social system that in all aspects of life is it professional or personal being male-dominated. A male-dominated society is bound to be following a patriarchal societal system where the rule makers are mostly men, and sadly there lies the problem. The decision-makers and the hierarchy below them are also male-dominated and hence women are not considered a part of society, and the rules made only favor the men. Not just India, the world is patriarchal, but unfortunately India today is now becoming a more and more unequal society and an unsafe and unharmonious place for women.

Women can be powerful actors for peace, security, and prosperity. When they participate in peace processes and other formal decision-making processes, they can play an important role in initiating and inspiring progress on human rights, justice, national reconciliation and economic revitalization. They can also build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines and speak up for marginalized and minority groups. Investing in women's leadership is therefore smart security as well as smart development.

Women have proven time and time again that when they have the opportunity they can certainly rise to the occasion and lead with strength, respect, and empathy. Having more women in positions of leadership will not only help to guide the world towards a place where gender equality is the norm, but it will also help to illustrate a future of endless possibilities for young girls, so that they too can strive for greatness and aim to become formidable leaders one day. Many gains in the name of female leadership have been made globally in recent years. In fact, women currently occupy some of the world's most important positions of authority. While these women, and so many more, must be celebrated for their achievements, it is important to note that we are still far from a place where gender equality is a reality globally.

23rd April, 2023 marks the flash moment of birth centenary of Abha Maiti, the ardent freedom fighter, dedicated politician and a sacred social activist who served in soil, state and country. 'Admirable Abha', as she was affectionately called, dedicated her life to public service in various capacities — as the leader cum commander to her parties; as a social worker serving among the poor and the marginalised; and as the daughter and mother to the region. She was unequivocally committed to the ideals of Gandhism, patriotism, equality, secularism, social justice, women empowerment, and adhered to them in her professional and personal life.

In her childhood, her father was a source of inspiration to her. Surprisingly, she was a woman of courage and admired people with fighting spirit in time.

This inquisitive effort is to assess the best one who imprinted her unique presence in each and every sense of women empowerment. All the domains of empowerment have been enlightened with the great works of this wonder woman. Although the decades were tough to imagine for women, the 'lady with the lamp of empowerment' was brightened solely like the main sequence stellar having the distinct pathway, power and personality (P-3). This remote rural maid from the middle class background was habituated with various obstacles in the life struggling since her childhood. Leadership with motherhood, working with brotherhood and staying like neighbourhood are her attributes to be a successful public figure from a passionate daughter of the soil.

Availability, adaptability and acceptability are the three keys to be ideal public figure whereas Abha Maiti was featured by all those. She was not the representative of party's voters only, but the envoy of the soil and lieutenant for all people. Having the integrated figure of delicacy and dignity she was Gandhian delegate in party and elegant in practice. Since she was a solid advocate in Gandhian Philosophy, was habituated with the theory of Gandhism and its continuous and intensive practices in her personal life, political activities, social works and also development-welfare-management actions from the chair of achieved power. Finally, it may be said that Admirable brilliant heartiest ava (ABHA) was not for soil only, but also for state and nation more; she was in the public, with the public and for the public rather than being a popularized political figure in time. Hence, on the flash light of her birth centenary celebration she may be concluded as the inspiring life learnable "lady with the lamp" of distinctness and empowerment, who was significantly inspired by the pathway of 1930's 'Indian Nightingale', Sarojini Naidu.

“As long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the cause of freedom...I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman, I give to you the weapons of faith and courage and the shield of fortitude. And as a poet, I fling out the banner of song and sound, the bugle call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery...”

- Sarojini Naidu

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