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# Feminism in National History: A Case Study of Melchora Aquino

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## ABSTRACT

*Revolution changes a nation and along with it, brings out the best in its men and women. There have been countless stories of extraordinary courage and heroism throughout our nation's history. But none so inspiring as the life of Melchora Aquino (A.k.a. Tandang Sora) who at the age of 84 joined and participated in revolutionary activities that marked the Filipino's colonial past. It has been etched in history that in her native town, Tandang Sora operated a small store which became a refuge for the sick and wounded revolutionaries. Without fear for her life and the consequences brought about by her actions, she fed, gave medical attention to and encouraged the revolutionaries with motherly advice and prayers. She also volunteered her own abode to be the venue of secret meetings of the "Katipuneros" (revolutionaries). These actions would spell death if caught by the colonial government of that time.*

*Tandang Sora's selfless commitment to the cause of the revolution is worth emulating by the women of today. Regardless of physical limitations brought about by gender and age, she taught Filipino women, most especially those in their sunset years that it is never too late to make a difference. That freedom is worth the sacrifice. In her time, she heard the bell toll to signal a call to an end to oppression and slavery. The same bells toll today for a call to good governance, to economic independence, to equal rights to social service and to the justice system. It tolls for the plight of all those seeking a future envision with hope for the betterment of every Filipino. These are the part of the modern struggle that every Filipino experiences today. The time is ripe for Tandang Sora's rebirth. Filipino women would do well to find meaning in taking an active role in the fight against modern tyrannies that enslave the people of the country.*

*This paper postulates the relevance of Tandang Sora's heroic deeds in today's time. It seeks to show how women can contribute significantly to making a difference. Using a historical backdrop of the life of Tandang Sora and her concrete actions during her time that has made her remarkable, it shall attempt to provide an analogy on how similar actions can be done by women of today's time to become part of the solutions to the struggles of today. In essence, it brings to life the fervor of this heroine for Filipino women.*

**Keywords:** Tandang Sora, Revolution, Filipino women

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A Geriatric Female Revolutionary**

No one would have thought that an 84-year old woman by the name of Melchora Aquino, popularly known as ‘Tandang Sora’, would come to represent an important symbol in Philippine history; one that would outlive her natural life and would remain to this day as a vibrant reminder that women play crucial roles in nation building alongside their male counterparts. She lives to this day as a symbol of revolutionary feminism whose ideals of bravery and nationalism can be emulated by women of various political persuasions.

At the outset, let us begin by painting an image of the elderly woman who has come to symbolize one of the female personas of the Philippine Revolution of 1896 alongside Gregoria de Jesus, Bonifacio’s spouse.

While tending her small store, she opened the doors of her room by taking care of wounded ‘Katipuneros’ while at the same time ensuring that her house remained open for the revolutionary group’s clandestine activities seeking to overthrow the Spanish authorities. She did this unmindful of the dangers that she placed herself into. Discovery would have meant exile at the least or outright execution. Although there are no accounts of this old lady of plebian origin having participated in any of the skirmishes that the Katipunan fought against the Spanish colonizers, nevertheless, her contribution is palpable enough to warrant a close examination. The life she lived is something that is worth emulating for both the men and women of the present times.

But first let us outline some preliminaries that will elucidate how the analysis of this paper shall proceed.

### **Methodology and Framework**

For the purpose of this research, the researcher will be employing the historical analysis method. Historical analysis seeks to understand a phenomenon from the past that could best serve as a guide for future actions (Ross, 1989). It is a specific type of analytical framework that is best used in the examination of historical events and how they play out or influence present and future events. Mindful of the thrust of this current paper, that is, to examine the lessons that can be drawn from the life of Tandang Sora for current and future women activists, this is an apt method through which the analysis will be done.

For the said analysis to be successful, it is crucial to lay the groundwork of the grand old lady’s historical context to better understand her as a phenomenon waiting to be unraveled. As such,

her socio-political context has to be presented. In historical analysis, this always serves as the starting point of the discussion. Thereafter, she is uncloaked as a historical figure. Once this is done, the analysis proceeds by outlining how the historical phenomenon can serve as a guide for future actions.

For the current undertaking, historical analysis is to be done within the feminist lens inasmuch as the lessons that will be drawn from her life will be done mindful of the need to drive women today to liberate themselves from the patriarchal confines that they find themselves in. Despite declarations to the contrary, women still find themselves in conditions that belie the so-called liberation that they are enjoying. In the Philippines in particular, women are constantly examined from the yardstick that a patriarchal system has institutionalized throughout history.

The feminist framework breaks out of the said constricting mold and proceeds to conduct the analysis from a woman's *weltanschauung*. To do so in this paper, the researcher seeks to underscore Tandang Sora not only as a nationalist because this would limit the profound legacy that she has left to the Filipino people, the women in particular. More than a nationalist, the researcher seeks to underscore her feminist persona, namely, one that broke off the stifling shackles of her time.

This is apt considering that feminism seeks to challenge the disadvantaged status that women suffers from in their political and public lives (Worell, 2000). In light of the overall thrust of feminism, to confine any historical analysis of our object of study would take her out of the more specific feminist underpinnings of her actions. In the mindset of the researcher, this is where the best lessons come be drawn in examining her life.

## II. UNCONCEALING A WOMAN REVOLUTIONARY

Truth be told, it would have been nice to subject this old woman to a rigorous psychological examination if only to pry into her mind in order to examine the motivations that prompted her to act as she did, reason/s that only she would have known. Nevertheless, whatever her reasons may have been, her actions played a crucial part in the revolution of 1896.

Without a doubt she was a female nationalist, one of a breed of female nationalists across Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As she was busy tending her store and taking care of the Katipuneros, her Chinese counterparts where likewise fighting for equality from the Machu emperors of the Qing dynasty ( Zarrow, 1988). Zarrow likewise stated that revolutionary feminists were fighting for equality and emancipation from their male oppressors in Japan as well as Russia from the 1850s in the case of the latter, and since the early 1900s in the context of the former.

In the Spanish colonies in the Americas as well, “women challenged the traditional models of female behaviour as passive and servile. While some undoubtedly did go to war disguised as men, a substantial proportion was willing and able to serve their political beliefs without renouncing their gendered identity. Furthermore, many did so without ostentatiously stepping outside their traditional sphere of influence, the home and the family. These women were certainly not 'silly, passive and dependent' and were more than 'witnesses and victims'; rather, they were actors and instigators willing to fight for their ideals” (Brewster, 2005). Obviously, the 1800s was rife with women nationalists the world over as the age of colonialism was setting its sun over the European colonies across the continents. Tandang Sora was just one of many women nationalists all over the world. They fought in battles or just like she was who was constrained already by her age, they supported the revolutionary struggles from the sidelines as nurses, cooks or just a comforting presence. In the Latin American wars of independence “women's labour, although 'invisible' 'was crucial to the daily conduct of war', particularly in the provision of food: 'in addition to the rest of their daily tasks [women] were engaged in making between 1,800 and 2,400 tortillas every day' to feed the guerrilla troops (Mallon, 1995 as cited by Brewster, 2003).

For our present goal, we ought to examine the lessons that we can derive from her. Lessons that modern day Filipinas can learn from the revolutionary life exemplified by Tandang Sora. Reading through her actions, motivations and her life in general, what inspiration can our contemporary Filipina patriots derive from her?

To fully understand the context that precipitated her actions, let us delve intricately into the motivations that prompted her to act as she did when she could have acted otherwise for her own safety and that of her loved ones.

### **III. LAYING THE GROUND: WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE REVOLUTION?**

The historian Vincente Pilapil writing in 1965 outlined the social and political situation of the Philippines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prior and leading to the Philippine revolution of 1896. He states that the “real cause of the Philippine revolution was the political maturation and the national awakening of the Philippine people. This combined with the stirrings of liberalism, brought about the inevitable conflict t” (Pilapil, 1965). It has to be noted that the upheaval that engulfed the Philippines in 1896 that eventually led to the outright overthrow of the Spaniards from the islands in 1898 was merely the end point of a long struggle that was waged by the Filipino as early as 16<sup>th</sup> century, at the very moment when the ‘conquistadores’ set foot in the Philippines. Ferdinand Magellan experienced firsthand the patriotic fervor of the natives in defense of their

motherland. Throughout the 300-year period of the Spanish colonization, numerous other invaders suffered the same fate as the Portuguese explorer through the subsequent rebellions and uprisings that constantly reminded the invaders that their position in the country was precariously tethering towards collapse. Tandang Sora was not the sole woman who has shown the courage to fight the injustices and abuses wrought on the hapless Filipinos by the invaders because women like Gabriela Silang of the Ilocandia as well as Gregoria de Jesus also did so. However, she stands a notch above the rest due to her advanced age when she figured prominently in the said conflict.

The Spanish conquistadores who came to the Philippines in the latter stage of their conquest were not necessarily saints. Widespread abuses characterized their rule, thus, incensing the people against their rule. It has to be bear in mind that the country was ruled by civil administrators representing the Spanish crown and this was headed by the governor general. The way these individuals treated the natives depended on their political leanings as well as their economic and political circumstance. Pilapil (1965) goes on say that “the political conditions of a colony can hardly be disengaged from those of the mother country. Spain since the early eighteenth century saw herself invaded by liberal ideas coming in from France. By 1812 these ideas of the Enlightenment found their way into the Spanish constitution wherein the democratic principle that sovereignty is essentially vested in the nation was laid down in the famous Article III.” By the following year, the same constitution found its way into the Philippines and was subsequently promulgated. Meaning to say, a liberal atmosphere came to the Philippines an brought about needed changes in the country. But this was short lived because after the liberal regime ceased to be in the Iberian peninsula, so did the liberal administrators in the colony. The most famous victim of the conservative backlash in the country was none other than Jose Rizal himself who was executed at the Bagumbayan (now Luneta) “still exhibiting such serene defiance—his pulse normal to the consternation of the Spanish doctor who examined him at the execution site, his body defiantly twisting as the firing squad bullets hit it so he would fall face up to the dawn and not humiliatingly sprawled in the dust” (Ileto as cited by Mendoza and Perkinson, 2003). Despite his execution, the man remains to this day much loved and in fact a cult and a religious group has been founded that exalts him as the ‘Tagalog Christ’.

It has to be noted, however, that the great man’s execution came about since he has earned the ire of the colony’s other rulers, namely, the Spanish friars. These men who were espousing the teachings of the loving God who became incarnate in the person of Christ fell too far from the tree that the savior planted. Simply put, they abused the generosity and love of the Filipino

people through their unchristian acts. For one, they owned vast landed estates that exacted huge fees from the farmers that tilled their lands. For example, the family of Rizal farmed a huge property in Laguna that was owned by one of these friar congregations. And his family has felt the brunt of their friar landlords and even landed his mother in jail for an extended period. Seeing this injustice, the nationalist Rizal vilified them in his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* as abusive and outright criminals. It came not as a surprise, therefore, that “a major component and outgrowth of the revolutionary fervor of the era was a movement to transfer leadership in the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines from Spaniards to Filipinos” (Doeppers, 1976).

The Filipino people, therefore, bore the brunt of the abuses and wanton rampage of these two groups, finally culminating in the Philippine revolution of 1896. This was the ground where Tandang Sora was laboring.

After carefully outlining the social and political situation of the Philippines in the 1800s, it is now time to underscore the image of the grand old woman of the revolution.

#### **IV. THE NATIONALIST LEGACY**

Allow me to outline the characters of Tandang Sora’s nationalist fervor. Foremost of all is her love for country. But more than her patriotic clarion call, it was her being one with the *Katipuneros* that ought to be brought to fore. At this present day and age of modernity and consumerist leanings, women should take heed of the example provided by the grand old woman of the Philippine revolution by putting the interest of the country at the paramount more than their personal interests. Admittedly, it would have been easier for someone at the end of her sojourns on earth to make this sacrifice compared to women at the prime of their age. However, it is the nationalist motivation of her act that is of importance here. So Filipina women of all ages are just able to make the same sacrifices as she did. Love of country transcends age, religion, and ethnic background, among others. Nowadays, the same love for country has been seen in women who labor in foreign lands for the dollars and euros that sustain the country’s economy. Although, I would say that the primary motivation is not necessarily altruistic because of their desire to sustain their families’ needs; then again, if you take a look beyond the superficial, our women overseas Filipina workers (OFW) are hailed as modern day heroes not only due to the greenbacks that they provide to the economy but also because of the ultimate sacrifice that they are willing to make to be away from their families. Hence, there is a character of being one with their fellow Filipinos. At times, the call for sacrifice also meant making the ultimate one by throwing away their lives into the mix such as the case of Flor

Contemplacion. At the end of that national drama that almost tested the relationship between neighbors, the Philippines and Singapore, she “indicated that she “was ready to die,” thanked everyone who had championed her cause, and calmed and comforted her own children. Rather than scramble after each thread of new hope that could lead to new disappointment, Contemplacion reached a point after two years on death row of facing her “fate” with equanimity” (Mendoza and Perkinson, 2003). Contemplacion and countless other OFWs, both men and women are able to make the same sacrifice because it is part of the Filipino psyche to go beyond their personal and selfish interests and find themselves in the other. Filipino psychologists identified this as the ‘kapwa’ notion of identity wherein Filipinos try their best to maintain smooth interpersonal relationships not because they seek to avoid conflicts but because we ‘ treat the other human person as kapwa or fellow human being.” (Enriquez, 1978, 1994; Pe-Pua and Marcelino, 2003; Mendoza and Perkinson, 2003). Truth be told, this is a crucial element of our shared selves. Once we treat someone as kapwa, we become intricately weaved together and become even responsible for one another. Tandang Sora without doubt just like Rizal, a contemporary though a much younger one, was without doubt motivated to act as she did because she had this shared self with the Katipuneros that she took care of. They were most likely neighbors, friends, relatives , or patrons of her little sari sari store. She would have interacted with them as she tended to their material needs. Hence, they have become her ‘kapwa’ so to speak. It is this ‘pakikipagkapwa-tao’ that must have formed a crucial link in her nationalist actions as a Filipina patriot, the same link in the psyche of many Filipinas from the domestic helper in a far flung country to women reporters who brave bullets if only to be able to expose corruption in their corner of the country.

It is important therefore for our modern day Filipina patriots to bear in mind that for them to serve the interests of the motherland above all else, they should do their best live the ideals of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. As they do so, they will be sure to remain loyal to the nationalist legacy of Tandang Sora. It is extremely crucial, however, that these women be constantly reminded to be on guard against the encroachment of the western nihilistic *weltanschauung*, lest they forsake their Filipino roots as they labor in these foreign lands. They must constantly root themselves in the land of their birth by keeping abreast with the goings on in the country. Also, they should seek opportunities to be with their fellow Filipinos in these lands because as they do so, they remain in communion with their Filipino psyche. Albeit a poor substitute to being in the Philippines, nevertheless, they are able to maintain their shared selves as Filipino as they enjoy their day offs whether in a public park in Hong Kong or in hearing Sunday mass in western countries. It helps to be near a compatriot to keep you one with the Filipino



consciousness.

On another note, it is crucial to examine the bravery that formed an important part of Tandang Sora's action. Activism should become part of every woman psyche if they seek to end the rampant abuses that is seen all over the Philippine society. They should take part in grass root movements that places so many social ills to the public because in doing so they would be able to keep this fresh in the minds of the public. Consequently, solutions become more possible as they are discussed and kept fresh in the people's consciousness. In their study of women activism in Argentina and Brazil, Burland and Sutton (2007) "recognized the potential impact of women's changed consciousness and hoped that new activists' experiences would result in long-term mobilization and social change. Collective action pushed women to recognize the shared nature of problems; this led to other changes". Despite the onset of progressive ideals all over the world and its consequent seeping into the Filipino consciousness, the feudal and militaristic mindset that became pervasive in the 1960s all the way to the early 1990s remain a potent threat to the democratic ideals of this country. The Ampatuan Massacre was not a fluke occurrence but a glaring reminder that there are still vestiges of political warlordism that is prevalent in the country. The end of martial rule did not mean that it disappeared. As a matter of fact, it has constantly plagued the country ever since the end of American rule in 1946. It is in this context that Filipina women can play an important role just like their counterparts in the Americas and Europe. A daunting task awaits them because "despite the explicit focus on women, there were many ambiguities and ambivalences resulting from the competing state projects in the political, socio-economic and cultural arenas offering women both privileged spaces and constraints in the development of gendered citizenship. The contradictions arise from simultaneously promoting women's rights, extolling traditional gender roles and fearing women's political activism" (Craske, 2005). We now live in a time when women are recognized as equal partners in nation building (at least in theory); however, many patriarchal thinking still lingers that sees women as mere vassals of their male overlords. It is this thinking that should be broken by constantly challenging patriarchal notions that prevent the ultimate liberation of women from the yoke of servitude to their husbands, fathers, brothers and other males in the general society. In a study of 'girl power' in a rural Chinese village, Yunxiang (2006) "mostly due to their previous marginality, young women have been particularly receptive to new family ideals based on gender equality, and more active in pursuing autonomy and independence in the domestic sphere than their male counterparts. Their rising power has also been more effective in challenging and changing the existing patriarchal hierarchy". Filipinas today have also been challenging the patriarchal norms in the country although much

remains to be done.

What are the manifestations of patriarchy in the Philippines?

First, the laws of the land tend to benefit the men over the women. For example, there is a disparity between the criminal sanctions imposed on husbands and wives that enter into marital infidelities. Concubinage is committed by any man who shall keep a conjugal dwelling, or shall have sexual intercourse, under scandalous circumstances, with a woman, who is not his wife, or shall cohabit with her in any other place ( Article 344 of the Revised Penal Code) while adultery refers to the carnal relation between a married woman and a man who is not her husband, the latter knowing her to be married, even if the marriage be subsequently declared void (Article 333 of the Revised Penal Code). It has to be noted that the penalty for concubinage is merely banishment or destierro while adultery metes jail time. And every adulterous sexual intercourse is one count of the crime. It has to be said that such a one-sided appreciation of these criminal acts stems from the fact that the relevant provisions of the law has been written by male lawmakers that were, in most instances, keeping mistresses and concubines. It comes not as a surprise, therefore, that the two crimes have disparate punishments. If these laws are to be amended to indicate a more liberal, thus, equal shift, then it is crucial that Filipina activists take lessons from their African counterparts from Zimbabwe or the former Rhodesia. The women of that country showed “a much stronger sense of women's rebelliousness appears in studies from Zimbabwe, which suggest that women actively accelerated the processes of change, motivated not only by the socio-economic context, but also by negative reactions to various facets of the old patriarchal order” (Wells, 2003). Simply put, if Filipina activists who have clamoring for the amendment of these laws are to succeed in their fight, then they have strongly lobby by showing that they would not take inaction sitting down. To date, despite the concreted efforts of women’s groups all over the country, the desired effect has yet to bear fruits. It can be traced to the second manifestation of patriarchy in the country, namely, there is still a prevailing attitude that women are simply appendages of their male partners or relatives. The old biblical adage that the woman is taken from a rib of the first man still holds sway in the rural and even in some areas of the urban Philippines. It comes not as a surprise that it becomes scandalous when a woman earns more than her husband, causing their family to suffer the stigma. And this stigma is felt more by the man, thus bruising his ego. Despite the coining of the term ‘househusband’, the mentality of the equality between the two sexes has yet to take hold. Sadly, even the women themselves have unwittingly subscribed to their subservience. For example, the women’s party list group Abanse Pinay has failed to garner any seat in all of the elections that it has participated in. Thus, they have been unable initiate any

meaningful legislation to alleviate the plight of the Filipina. Although the leftist women's group Gabriela has been in Congress for some time, they have only been able to do so because they belong to a network of party list organizations who benefit from the political machinery of the local communist party. Meaning to say, the political interest of the Filipina women is shrouded within the umbrella of the entire Philippine communist agenda.

Tandang Sora would not take this injustice sitting down. Modern day inheritors of her legacy has to go to the streets, lobby legislators and of possible do all legal means to ensure that they become legislators themselves. More importantly, they would not allow themselves to play second fiddle to their male counterparts; that is, they would not allow their interests to be judged, evaluated and conceived from the male point of view. The female perspective is an entirely different one that demands different appreciation from that of the masculine variety. As such, they have to fight actively for the enactment of laws and programs that will address their concerns. They have to keep in mind that they will not get their aims just by wishing for it.

Without alienating their more matured counterparts, the younger women has to be at the forefront of the struggle for women's emancipation. In the experience of rural China, "young women have been particularly receptive to new family ideals based on gender equality, and more active in pursuing autonomy and independence in the domestic sphere than their male counterparts. Their rising power has also been more effective in challenging and changing the existing patriarchal hierarchy" (Yunxiang, 2006). Taking cue from their counterparts in the rural areas of mainland China, much rests in the hands of the younger Filipina women. Just like Tandang Sora from old, they can effect change by taking a more proactive form in their quest for women's equality.

To recapitulate, in the nationalist struggle that every women has to participate in, there are two obstacles that they must hurdle if they are to succeed in building a more liberal and egalitarian democratic Philippines. First, they have to overcome archaic laws that tend to favor men over women. Second, they have to penetrate the male-dominated worldview that is prevailing in the Philippines and usher in a more democratic country.

## **V. A FEMINIST INHERITANCE**

Thus far, we have examined the legacy of Tandang Sora from an overall nationalist mindset. At this point, it is important that we examine her legacy from the feminist view. In the latter stages of the previous discussion, we have alluded to this already; but in this section, a more detailed feminist analysis will be done. Tandang Sora was an old lady when she participated in

the revolution by providing aid to the wounded and weary revolutionaries. For some, age would have rendered them infirmed; hence, unable to be proactive in such a formidable task. This was not to be in her case. In addition, her supposed weakness due to being of the 'weaker sex' proved not an obstacle in her participating in the struggle. She has shown that women are equal and at times even better than their male counterparts. This is something that ought to be emulated by modern day women activists with feminist streaks. We ought not to view Tandang Sora's role as merely superficial nor secondary to that of the male revolutionaries. Her role has to be viewed in the larger context; that is, her role in the revolution was an intrinsic part without which, the revolution would have been 'unwhole'. Her part in the revolution had made it whole. She was not subject to the patriarchal hierarchy that dominated that struggle. In fact, she was both in and out of the revolutionary structure. This means that she was 'out' in the sense that she did not belong to the power structure of the KKK; but she was liberated from this structured KKK. But she was 'in' because she was a revolutionary in her own right.

Why would this be so?

Simply because, nursing the wounded and weary fighters have made it possible for them to fight on and rejoin the fight. Had there have been no one like her, they would succumbed easily to the call to stop the fight and just go back to their daily lives. She has shown that she had the 'balls' to join the struggle.

Just like their western counterparts, Filipina feminists either subscribe to the liberal ideology or that of the Marxist view. Either way, feminists of both persuasions can manage to espouse their call to gain freedom from male domination using the example of Tandang Sora. Some may raise their eyebrows considering that she was viewed as having done so while still embracing the male-dominated mindset because the contention of some scholars is that Bonifacio's group had yet to imbibe any feminist leaning during their time. This may be true, but it has be noted that it was her willingness to overcome the social constraints that women ought to be confined to the homes that made her a budding feminist way before the women's liberation movement ever came in existence in the whole world. To date, the mothers of the many political activists who have disappeared under police and military detention can draw numerous lessons from her. They ought not only call for justice for their sons and daughters, but they have to show these fascistic elements within the armed services that they cannot hold on to their domination for long and that they would not simply disappear into the sunset just like their children. The force of the gun and butts of the rifles are weak in comparison to the resolve of women whose only cry is justice.in this day and age of high speed internet and under the ever-penetrating glare of the mass media, feminists can show that the age-old male

domination is nearing its end. However, the caveat is that this would be possible, if and if, the feminists will grow in political maturity to gain political power themselves and effect the change that they want to gain. Only by being at the center of power will any radical change become truly possible.

The Marxist among the feminists, on the other hand, will claim that a meaningful revolution that will usher in genuine gender equality is possible only if they would participate in the armed struggle too. In Spain, the women activists of the ETA have been shown that “on the whole women's motivations for participating in armed activism have not differed substantially from those of men” (Hamilton, 2007). This means that a woman revolutionary welding a submachine gun is as good as her male counterpart. Like them they can shoot and kill as well. Admittedly, Tandang Sora did not do the said things; but she was willing to risk all for her beliefs. And if Marxist-feminist activists are willing to bring about their cause within a socialist milieu then shooting another person ought not to be a serious obstacle.

Overall, Tandang Sora refused to be shackled by the limits set by the patriarchal society on how she ought to behave. Instead she participated in the revolution in her own terms. This made her a feminist way ahead of her times. Any feminist at present who would like to take up the cause of Tandang Sora’s feminist leanings must refuse to be limited by the conventions of the Philippine society. They must think out of the box so to speak by fashioning a role for themselves in the Philippine democratic struggle outside of the limits of the male-dominated values.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Tandang Sora’s legacy calls to women activists today in two forms. First, she calls on the Filipinas to join in the nationalist struggle for the institution of a genuine democracy in the Philippines. And to do so, they must overcome the obstacles set by the rules and regulation that have been conceived by the men for their own dominance over what they mistakenly perceive as the ‘weaker sex’. In addition, their participation in the nationalist struggle must overcome the mindset that dictates how they behave as members of the larger Philippine society. They have to act as they please in bringing about their stake in the larger struggle for a genuine democracy in the Philippines.

Second, the grand old lady of the Philippine revolution calls on the Filipinas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to participate strongly in the women liberation movement that seeks to break once and for all their subservience both to the male dominance in the political and economic spheres. More importantly, be they of the liberal or Marxist leanings, her call to modern day feminists

behooves them to refuse to be limited by the confines set by men on their bodies. Hence, if their struggle would demand that they join in an armed struggle, they should not shirk from such possibility. In fact, they should embrace it if success would call for it.

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