Who is Annie Besant?

Annie Besant was born as Annie Wood was born on October 1st 1847 in London.

Parents: Emily Morris and William Wood, were her Irish origin parents. Annie's father was a doctor who died when she was just five years old.

Early Life: She was raised by Ellen Marryat, a friend of her mother's, who gave Annie good education. Annie extensively traveled Europe as a young woman.

Education: She received private education in across several countries such as France, England and Germany. She matriculated from London University in 1879 and pursued further studies in science but met hindrances further.

Marriage: At the age of twenty she was married to Rev. Frank Besant, and had a son and a daughter from her marriage namely, Arthur Digby and Mabel respectively.

Career: In 1874, she joined the National Secular Society and worked with Charles Bradlaugh, MP. She also was the co-editor for the National Reformer and was an author to many political books and pamphlets (1874–88). In 1907, she was elected as the President of Theosophical society (HQ in Madras). First 20 years of her career, she was engaged in social, educational and religious reforms.

Contributions/ Major Achievements:

1. President of Theosophical Society of India and also founded the Indian Scout Movement in 1918.
2. She founded the Home Rule League in 1916 and demanded self rule in India
3. She became the first ever woman president of Indian National Congress.
4. The newspaper "New India" was started by her where she strongly criticized the British rule in India and was even jailed for sedition.
5. She founded the Central Hindu College at Benares in 1898.

Awards and Recognition:

- She got a chance to represent the Theosophical Society at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.
- Her educational services towards India were recognized in the form of the degree of Doctor of Letters, which was given to her in 1921**.**
- She was given the title of Honorary Scout Commissioner for India and in 1932 received the highest Scout distinction in the form of the 'Silver Wolf' medal.

Conclusion: Annie Besant was one of the prominent social reformer, theosophist, political leader, writer, orator and a women's rights activist. Her role was substantial and significant in the Indian independence struggle.