

India's unsung women freedom fighter - Smt. Rama Devi choudhary.

Smt - Rama Devi choudhary, the freedom fighter, who is also known as Mother of Odisha or "Maa", who led the Indian Salt Satyagrah in Balasore. We know that in March 1930 Mahatma Gandhi began his famous Dandi March from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi coast in Saurashtra District in Southern Gujarat against the oppressive salt law of the British government.

But many may not be aware that similar marches were held in Balasore and Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha. And these protest marches were organised mainly by a group of women committed to Gandhian way.

The Dandi March was a major event in India's freedom movement and Gandhiji's call to break the salt law stirred the imagination of the people across the country.

In continuation of my facebook posts on forgotten women freedom fighter, today, I recall the role played by Smt - Rama Devi Choudhary who was affectionately called Maa (Mother) by the people of Odisha.

She was born on 3rd December 1899 in a very rich Zamindar family to Smt. Basanta Kumari Devi and Shri. Gopal Vallabh Das. During her childhood, she was deeply influenced by her Uncle, Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das, a prominent lawyer, social reformer and a tall public figure in Odisha. At a young age of 15, she was married to Shri. Gopabandhu Choudhary.

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In the year of 1921, she met gandhiji and Kasturba at Bindal Bihari temple of contact and presented them with a bundle of handwoven cotton. This interaction changed the course of her life completely. She decided to give up the life of comfort and plunge into her freedom movement. Her husband also quit his high ranking government job. Rama Devi along with her husband and other family members joined the non-cooperation movement.

In 1930, she took an active part in organizing salt satyagrah in different part of odisha. She led hundred of women at inchudi and sijang across of Balesore district, in which was known as inchudi salt satyagrah. Smt Rama Devi choudhry began touring village and motivated thousand of women to join the freedom struggle.

Thus, salt satyagrah spread from Arabian sea in the west, where Rupa herself made salt, to Bay of Bengal in the East. where Rama Devi and her followers defied salt laws. She and her fellow satyagrahis were arrested and released as a part of the Gandhi Jaiin part in 1931.

In 1932, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call to eradicate the social evil of untouchability, she established Atprishya Nibaran Samiti to work for the welfare of Harijan brethren. Later her institution was rechristened as Harijya Seva Sangh. when Mahatma Gandhi launched his movement from poona in 1934. she went from village to village to mobilize people in support of eradicated untouchability, prevailing

prohibition and other Gandhian ideal. She also used to collect donation and mobilize volunteers for the movement. After Kasturba ji's death Gandhiji asked her to be representative of the solicher chapter of Kasturba's Trust.

Just day after Mahatma Gandhi launched the quit India movement on 8th August 1942. Smt Rama Devi was imprisoned along with entire family consisting of her husband, son, daughter and her-in-law. Volunteers used to impart training in khadi weaving, several trades like dairy and bee-keeping and provide basic education.

A vast number of lesser-known freedom fighters like Smt. Rama Devi chavdhary have played a significant role in India's attainment of freedom. After independence Rama Devi ji continued her work of spreading Gandhian ideal in various capacity.

During the Emergency, she along with other leaders protested against the curtailment of democratic right and began to publish a newspaper from her room secret press to protest against press censorship.

Rama Devi ji was a true Gandhian, who dedicated her life in the service of the nation and people. Even after her death, she left behind the legacy in the form of Shishu vibas and cancer were central at Cuttack.

As the nation approaches 75th years of its independence, we have to remember and honour the unsung freedom fighters of their extraordinary grit for fight against the

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colonial rule and for their contribution toward
achieving toward India's independence. The stories
of their courage and sacrifices must to find a
place in our history Book.

Jai Hind !