

MAA RAMADEVI THE GREAT WOMAN OF JEEB ANAPATHE

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Abstract- Ramadevi Choudhury (3rd Dec 1899-22july 1985) was an legendary women freedom fighter and Social Reformer of Odisha. Being influenced by Mahatma Gandhi she joined the Indian Freedom Movement. She was also a great Social Reformer of Odisha. She had established Harijan Welfare society, Ashprushyata Nivaran samiti, Utkal Khadi Mandal, Tribal Welfare Society, Primary School for Children (Sishu Vihar) & a Cancer Hospital at Cuttack. She also worked to promote education and protect Rights of women. Therefore she was respectfully called as MAA (Mother) by people of Odisha.

Key Words: Ramadevi Choudhury, Indian freedom fighter, *Women*, social reformer.

Those who are not attracted by the materialistic happiness, rather sacrificed their luxurious life and empathetic on other's pain, they are great people. They take birth in the earth in a good time to do many heavenly works. They struggle for the development of the people and selfless effort for service to the mankind. Maa Ramadevi Chaudhury is one of the great woman among them.

She always follows the principles and views of Mahatma Gandhi and gets the right path from the Bhagabat Geeta. Both were the pillars of her personality.

The greatest and holy lifestyle of Maa Ramadevi was first published in Sarvodaya Patrika and, latter her autobiography was written in Jeebanapathe.

France literator Sarth says "Writing is an expression of one's independence and feelings of completeness. The independence to change the incomplete and dark world into a complete and beautiful new world." Maa Ramadevi inscripts her feelings in Jeebanapathe in considering the independence of mankind. She was a good housewife, good wife, good worker for the mankind, freedom fighter and good literator. She was a good cook and expert in Hindi and Bangla. She had faced many obstacles in her life which were written in Jeebanapathe.

Some glimpses of history of Odisha before the birth of Maa Ramadevi.

- In 1803, Britishers acquired Odisha.
- In 1806, Britishers gave capital punishment (phasi) to Jayakrushna Rayaguru [kulapurahit](#) of Khordha king and captured the rights of Paikas.
- They auctioned the landlordship of many khandayatas and auctioned many lands in Odisha in between 1806 to 1808.
- Paika Bidroha occurred in 1817.
- Sipahi Bidroha occurred in 1857.
- Nanka Durbikhya occurred in 1866.

- National Congress was established in 1885 and the active members were Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Neheru, Mahamad Ali Jinnah, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ballavbhai Patel and Subash Bose.

In this political environment in India, Ramadevi Choudhury was born in Satyabhamapur, Cuttack district of Odisha on December 3, 1899. She was the second daughter of famous literaturer Shree Gopal Balav Das and Mrs. Basanta Kumari Devi. Her great father Madhusudan Das was the first advocate of the state and revered to as Utkal Gourab.

She had an interest to work for the nation from the childhood and this interest was created and inherited in her by the works, qualities and advices of father, great father, mother, Shree Arabinda, Queen Victoria, Anibesant and Vivekanand. Her mother was telling stories of Ramayana, Mahabharata and some good education in her childhood. If she did any mistake or blunder or wrong thing, beating is separate thing - her mother never ever told hard words to her. That's why, she had not any fear to her mother. Maa Ramadevi was calm and lovable; she had no anger. She had patience and tolerant. She had got all these qualities from her mother. She beautifully does any work and leaves no stone unturned.

At a young age of 15, she got married to Gopabandhu Choudhury, who was then a deputy collector by profession. She and her husband the two together joined the Indian independence movement in 1921. She was influenced by Arabind and said "Everything can be given for the shake of the nation." Ramadevi realized that the other name of life is service to mankind and that is happiness. She said "the Almighty has give a power to man and he or she can tolerate whatever pain comes to his or her life.

She was highly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. She used to go from village to village to encourage women to join the independence movement. Others who influenced her were Jai Prakash Narayan, Vinoba Bhave and her uncle Madhusudan Das. In 1921, she had her first meeting with Gandhiji and with her husband joined the Non Cooperation Movement. The same year they joined the Indian National Congress and started wearing khadi. In they year 1930, she took active part in Salt Satyagraha movement at Orissa level. She went to Inchudi and Srijang, with other activist like Kiranbala Sen, Maltidevi, Saraladevi, Pranakrushna Padhiari. She and other of her colleagues were arrested in November 1930 and put in different jails by British. She was arrested several times (in 1921, 1930, 1936, 1942) with other women independence activists like Sarala Devi, Malati Choudhury and others and was sent to jail. The great women who came to help Maa Ramadevi in different works were Kiranbala Sen, Malatilata, Ramamani, Arnapura Sahu, Raba Ray, Nirmala Nayak, Prativa Kar, Suprava Kar, Sukhalata Rao, Sudhansubala Hajara, Sundarmani Parija, Nirmala Devi, Abanti Devi, Janhabi Devi, Sailabala Das, Kokila Devi, Sarala Devi, Sarojini Choudhury, Hemabati Devi and Chanchala Devi. She attended the 1931 Karachi session of Indian National Congress and at that time requested leaders to hold next session in Orissa. In 1932 after release from Hazaribagh jail, she got herself actively involved in Harijan welfare. She stated Asprushyata Nibarana Samiti under the instruction of Gandhiji for eradication of untouchability. The institution was later renamed as Harijan Sewa Sangha She was closely involved in the 1932 and 1934 visits to Orissa by Gandhiji, Kasturba, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and others. She started an Ashram at Bari, which Gandhiji had named as Sewaghar. During Quit India Movement of 1942 the entire family of Rama Devi including her husband Gopabandhu Choudhury were arrested. After the death of Kasturba Gandhi, Gandhiji assigned her with the work of the representative of Kasturba Trust's of Orissa Chapter.

After Independence

Rama Devi did not rest after the country got its independence in 1947. She dedicated her life to the landless and poor, having participated in Bhoodan and Gramdan movement. In 1952 she along with her husband she traveled on foot about 4000 kilometres across the state to propagate the message of giving land and wealth to the landless and poor. She established the Utkal Khadi Ashram and a Teachers' Training Institute in Ramchandrapur. In 1950 she set up a Tribal Welfare Centre at Dumburugeda. During the 1951 famine she and Malati worked in famine relief in Koraput. Maa Ramadevi marched barefoot across Odisha to spread Gandhi's ideals. Ramadevi also worked towards helping Indian soldiers who had been affected by the 1962 Indo-China war.

She established a primary school, Shishu Vihar and a cancer hospital at Cuttack.

In recognition of her services to the nation, Ramadevi was awarded the Jamnalal Bajaj Award on 4 November 1981 and the Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris causa) by Utkal University on 16 April 1984.

Ramadevi Women's University at Bhubaneswar is named in her memory. The school - Shishu Vihar - started by her at Cuttack is now named Ramadevi Shishu Bihar

Ramadevi died on July 22, 1985 in Cuttack.

Conclusion

Rama Devi Choudhury was a prominent freedom fighter as well as a social reformer. She was known for her contributions to the Bhoodan and Gramdan movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Rama Devi was an active participant in the protest against the Indira Gandhi government during Emergency and was also arrested. The people of Odisha fondly remember her as Maa.

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