



SALT MOVEMENT AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INCHUDI, BALASORE

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Abstract:- (It is said behind a man, there is a woman. Creation of woman is the wonderful phenomenon of creator. She is the mother, sister, lover and wife in all. She is known as the better half of man and an integral part of society. She is the source of inspiration and courage. Male counterpart can not change the society if there is no woman participation. Women played a vital role for the reconstruction of society. The freedom movement of India as well as Odisha were no exception to this. In the beginning of the Gandhian Movement the women workers were mainly from reputed families and their influence upon the women section of the society was encouraging and significant. The salt satyagraha marked the beginning of a true political career for Oriya women, bringing into lime-light a large number of lady luminaries. Inchudi of Balasore district was a main centre of salt satyagraha where women played vital role.)

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The National Congress in its Lahore session declared complete independence as the goal of Congress and Jan. 26, 1930 was declared as the Independence day and complete independence was declared to be the inalienable rights of the Indians. The Civil-Disobedience Movement, 1930-32 evoked mass response and the working committee of the Congress authorised Gandhiji to start the Civil-Disobedience Movement as and when he thought it proper and suitable.

Salt Satyagraha:-

The all India National Congress committee met on 21 March 1930 and endorsed the resolution about Salt satyagrah passed by the working committee. With the beginning of the salt satyagrah all over the country the freedom movement took a new turn.

On 12 March, 1930 to disobey the salt law Gandhiji started his foot march from Sabarmati Ashram along with 79 satyagrahis. The satyagrahis reached at Dandi on 5 April 1930. The villagers cheered them up to welcome the satyagrahis. These villagers watered the roads and covered them with green leaves and flowers. From Odisha satyagrahi Motibas Das had participated in this march. The salt march brought to the Indians confidence and conviction to throw away the Britishers. This also made the British Government aware that they would not be able to keep the Indians under subjugation any longer.

Salt Satyagrah in Odisha:-

It was a period when the whole country embraced the Gandhian ideal of satyagrah. Odisha also came within the orbit of the movement like many other States. On 28 Feb. 1930 in a meeting of Utkal Pradesh Congress committee (UPCC) a decision was taken to start mass Civil Disobedience Movement in Odisha and the responsibility was entrusted to Gopabandhu Choudhury for parliamentary arrangements. On 16th March 1930, a special session of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) was summoned at Balasore. In this historic meeting the congress member decided to launch salt campaign at Inchudi near Balasore. Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab and Surendranath Das remained in-charge of the salt campaign at Inchudi. An advanced party reached Inchudi to spread the congress message in the area through propaganda. Directions were sent to the district Congress committee to recruit volunteers who would cooperate with the satyagrahis and carry on other programmes of the congress.

Salt Satyagraha in Inchudi:-



Inchudi, the second Dandi of India was selected to be the place where the salt campaign was to begin during national week in April, 1930. From Balasore, it is 12 miles distant. Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab and Surendranath Das were entrusted with salt campaign at Inchudi, Eram, Chudamani, Bideipur, Sartha, Jamukunda etc.¹ The district congress committee was directed to recruit volunteers who would actively participate in the salt satyagraha. A new satyagraha centre was opened at Sartha on the 20th April by the decision of congress working committee and a prior notice to the district Magistrate was also served soon after the entire coastline of undivided Balasore became the storm center for breaching the salt laws of British Govt.

On 13 April 1930, in the early morning Acharya Harihar Das broke the salt law at Inchudi with volunteers. An old man of 62 years named Binod Choudhury made a true demonstration of Gandhian non-violent resistance. The involvement of women in salt satyagrah at Inchudi under Rama Devi and Kiranbala Sengupta was remarkable one. They organized a meeting which was attended by 1000 women. In her address Rama Devi appealed to the women to give up all luxury and to participate in the movement². Local women came out of their houses and manufactured salt at Inchudi. After being released from jail Gopabandhu Choudhury joined the salt satyagraha³.

In a meeting held at Balasore the Provincial Congress committee decided that the villagers should be allowed to participate in the salt satyagraha centres on the sea coast of Balasore. In the neighbouring villages in Balasore district like Chhanua, Parikhi, Padampur, Badchana, kuligaon, Ratei, Rasalpur, Eram, Basta and Sartha villagers started manufacturing salt from the sea water.

Selling of unlawful salt in villages became a part of the salt agitation. To encourage the satyagrahis people at different places bought it even at a higher price than the market rate. Volunteers moved towards Balasore on Nimiki Road for the sale of contraband salt. Illegal salt was sold openly at Balasore. Near Motiganj and at Marwaripati in Balasore one sera of illegal salt was sold at the rate of 2 annas⁴.

With the progress of the salt agitation the police became more repressive. Armed police were brought from Puri, Cuttack, and Balasore. They kicked satyagrahis, broke their salt pots, snatched away salt from their hands and insulted them. When the satyagraha reached its climax, important leaders like Harekrushna Mahatab, Pranakrushna Padihary, Acharya Harihar Das and Golaknath De were sentenced to six months imprisonment. Gunanidhi Mohanty and Chakrapani Rout were sentenced to one month imprisonment. In 1930 about 288 satyagrahis were arrested in Balasore along with Inchudi⁵.

Being arrested by the police the congress leaders remained in jail. From jail they issued instruction to the outsiders to carry out the struggle for freedom. Pranakrushna Padihary wrote three letters to Ram Devi and Sarala Devi⁶. In this letters he requested them to make arrangement to manufacture salt along with Sarala Devi and to instruct Malati Choudhury to supervise Salt Satyagrahi⁷. During the Civil-Disobedience Movement which started from 1930, women played a vital role in the preparation of salt at Inchudi of Balasore district. After the arrest of Gopabandhu Choudhury on 8th April 1930, the arrival of Rama Devi with Malati Devi and Krishnabala Sen at Inchudi, galvanized the Salt Satyagraha and made it more effective⁸.

With this backdrop of the successful campaign of salt satyagraha movement, Pandit Nehru sent a Telegam on 17 Feb. 1931 as, "My greeting to all the satyagrahees in their National Struggle for freedom. I congratulated them and trust they will carry on the good fight till our mother land is free."⁹

The popular enthusiasm for the salt movement provided the objective conditions and rather necessitated the continuity of the struggle through a shift to the Anti Choukidar Movement when the monsoon set in.

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