

Jambuvati Pattanayak (1886-1943) and Freedom Struggle Reassessing the Role of First Woman Satyagrahi of Western Odisha

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ABSTRACT

Jambuvati Pattanayak (1886-1943) was the first woman Satyagrahi of Western Odisha during freedom struggle in the region. She was the wife of Bhagirathi Pattanayak (1884-1980) who was one of the noted and dedicated freedom fighters of Odisha. The nationalist struggle of the couple marked a revolutionary phase of freedom movement in undivided Sambalpur of the State. Her son Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak (1917—2003) also followed the glorious path of his great nationalist parents and played a key role with his friends Shrikrishna Prasad of Bihar and K.Goplan of Kerala in organizing and leading tribals during nation-wide Quit India Movement 1942-1943 in Santal Parganas of Jharkhand. Jambuvati Pattanayak and Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak were trained by Bhagirathi Pattanayak to fight against British colonialism who was highly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violence. She joined the Freedom Struggle and played a highly exciting role in its various phases not only in Sambalpur of Odisha but also in Santal Parganas of Jharkhand. With her husband and son, she also joined the groups of volunteers in distributing relief to the victims of earthquake in Munger in Bihar in 1934. Thus her activities covered the present three states of Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar (erstwhile Bengal Subah) Her chivalrous role in the Freedom Struggle motivated and inspired not only women but tribals and other people also of Odisha and Jharkhand. Her marvelous contribution to the Freedom Struggle is an exciting record of History of Modern India. In view of her contribution to the freedom Struggle she deserves to be accorded a high place and honour in the History of Freedom Movement in India. The study, therefore, mainly focus on tracing and reanalyzing her role in successive phases of Freedom Struggle of India.

Keywords: British, Struggle, Movement, Odisha, Freedom.

Introduction

As soon as the British control over Sambalpur was established, it became the centre of political upheavals. In 1849 Sambalpur was annexed to the British Empire by Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856) under his policy of Doctrine of Lapse. (Majumdar, Ray Chaudhuri & Datta 1950:760-761) But the great revolutionary Surendra Sai with his associates resisted (1849-1864) the authority of the British and paved the way for greater struggle by freedom lovers of Sambalpur. It is to be noted that during the Nation-wide struggle in 1857, Sambalpur exerted strong resistance against British under Surendra Sai. (Odisha Review 2012:32) Though the Struggle was

suppressed in most of the parts of India in 1858, Surendra Sai, with the help of his associates, continued fighting till 1864. He was imprisoned in the fort of Asirgarh, where he died in 1884. (Mohanty 2010:179) But his contributions inspired one and all. Therefore, Sambalpur played a chivalrous role as not only men but also women of the district actively participated in successive phases of freedom struggle. But most of them have been vanishing from public memory who had bravely contributed to the freedom struggle. The study traced and assessed chivalrous role of Jambuvati Pattanayak in freedom struggle and pointed out that Jambuvati Pattanayak deserves a

magnificent place in the Annals of Indian Freedom Struggle.

Purpose and Motivation

The underlying purpose of the paper is to trace and assess the dedicated and dynamic role of Jambuvati Pattanayak of undivided Sambalpur of Odisha during consecutive phases of freedom struggle. Motivated by the idea and concept of nationalist school of freedom struggle, the paper mainly focuses on the political struggles of Jambuvati Pattanayak during the National Movement in Odisha and its neighbouring states. Authentic historical sources disclose that personality and political struggles of Jambuvati Pattanayak inspired not only the people of undivided Sambalpur of Odisha but also that of Santal Parganas (then in Bihar, now in Jharkhand). She with her husband Bhagirathi Pattanayak and son Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak played a key role during Freedom Struggle in Sambalpur of Odisha as well as in Santal Parganas of Jharkhand and also played an active role in distributing relief to the victims of earthquake in 1934 in Munger in Bihar. .

Methodology

The paper is based on published sources in Books, Journals and Souvenir. Swarnika (1984) published on birth centenary of Bhagirathi Pattanayak in Odiya and Hindi formed a most important source for authentic historical facts about the political activities of Jambuvati Pattanayak. Memoirs written by freedom fighters and contemporary scholars are also important sources of the study. With the kind assistance of Railway staff Shri Bhrigu Mahapatra of Odisha posted at Rampurhat (W.B.) materials in Odiya were translated in English for proposed research purposes .A copy of the Swarnika and a book on Bhagirathi Pattanayak (in English and Odiya) were made available to me by her son late Prafulla Chandra Pattamayak who had organized Pahatrias and Santals of Santal Parganas against British Colonialism especially during nation-wide 1942 Quit India Movement in the region and waged armed struggle foreign rule for freedom.

Hypothesis

The peoples of the district of Sambalpur are better

known for their undaunted courage , marvelous sacrifice and unflinching dedication to the cause of freedom from British Rule. The heroes of National Struggle rose from the nook and corner of the district who revolutionized the district by their unceasing challenges to the British rule in the district. From Veer Surendra Sai (1857) to Bhagirathi Pattanayak (1942-1943) with Krishna Devi and Prabhavati Devi ,there is a long queue of freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for gaining of independence. It is , therefore ,rightly observed that “not only men but also the women of Sambalpur jumped into the frying pan of freedom struggle and showed their vigour and bravery despite of their domestic grim and social debar.”(Naik2018:69) Hypothetically with Prabhavati Devi and Krishna Devi etc. Jambuvati Devi must have played a leading role during the successive phases of freedom struggle as she belonged to great nationalist family of great nationalist leader her husband Bhagirathi Pattanayak (1884-1990)and her son Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak (1917-2003).

Literature Reviewed

There are a number of books on the History of Odisha. Many scholars took much interest in tracing and examining it through the ages as they compiled it in many volumes. Apart from books a number of scholars also wrote papers on the subject matter and discussed its various aspects. But in most of books and research papers the ground level role of Jambuvati Pattanayak is not discussed and assessed properly. In History of Orissa by Purna Chandra Das (2004/2008),Jambuvati Pattanayak mentioned in few lines. H.K.Mahatab(1958) and K.C.Panigrahi(1961) wrote on the history of Orissa but there is no detailed discussion of the role of Jambuvati Pattanayak in successive phases of Freedom Struggle in Orissa. In books by Patnaik(1957),Das(1957) and Patra and Devi(1983) also the role of Jambuvati Pattanayak couple is not assessed. In Orissa District Gazetteers-Sambalpur, Senapati discussed Freedom Movement in Sambalpur and noted that “Sambalpur took active part in Freedom Movement of India since 1919” (Senapati 1971:79) but wrote only few lines about Bhagirathi Pattanayak and Jambuvati Pattanayak.

(Senapati 1971:79-81). The books written in national perspective of Freedom Struggle also do not properly focus the nationalist struggles of Jambuvati Pattanayak. In History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III and Vol. IV by Majumdar, R.C. (1996), Chand, Tara (1972) respectively, in Chopra, P.N's India's Struggle for Freedom (ed. 1985) and Pande, B.N's A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (Gen. Ed. 1985) nationalist activities of Jambuvati Pattanayak are not mentioned.

Jambuvati Pattanayak(1886-1943) and Freedom Struggle

Jambuvati Pattanayak (born on 9 November 1886 in Binika village of Bargarh district) was the First Woman Satyagrahi of Western Odisha. She had a little schooling but intelligently played a key role in arousing women to participate in Freedom Struggle. She was very much influenced and inspired by Rama Devi, Sarla Devi, the leading woman figures in the movement and her husband Bhagirathi Pattanayak. With Lakshmi Narayan Mishra, Ghanshayam Panigrahi, Achyutanand Purohit and Chintamani Pujari, her husband Bhagirathi Pattanayak made vigorous drive against untouchability and spread of education among the Harijan people of the district. (Senapati 1971:80). She joined the Freedom Struggle of India and played vital role in its successive phases. On December 23, 1928, Mahatma Gandhi visited Sambalpur (Senapati 1971:80). The visit proved to be an important event in the history of Freedom Movement in Sambalpur as it aroused national feelings in one and all. In 1929, Jambuvati left home with her husband and son Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak in support of Congress Movement. She established Ashram at Balitikira, Tukurla (Bargarh), Budharaja (Sambalpur) and also at Jharsuguda. These establishments strengthened the Congress Organisation and produced female leaders for the movement. From February 1931, she walked shoulder to shoulder with her husband and son in Freedom Struggle of the country. It is to be noted that it was an unprecedented case in India that whole family joined the Freedom Struggle and devoted themselves to the service of the motherland.

For the first time, she participated in Civil Disobedience Movement and burnt some bundles of foreign clothes in the Bazar of Barpali. (Senapati 1971:81) She was arrested and suffered imprisonment for six months. She was sent to Sambalpur jail for 6 months and then shifted to Bhagalpur Central Jail for next 6 six months. (Hasan 2001:255) Under her leadership, ten women Satyagrahis of Sambalpur joined in Balasore Salt Satyagraha. She was expert in organizing woman association and collect subscription for Salt Satyagraha. She played a unique role in creating patriotic feeling among the women. In 1931 she courageously hoisted the national flag on January 26 at the local market place in Barpali against the opposition of British forces. According to Debata, "She manifested her immense love for independence. The incident unveiled a new chapter of her revolutionary life and secured for her an important position in Sambalpur." (Debata 2019:71-72)

On 2nd March 1931 at Sambalpur a big farmers' rally was so successfully organized that Bhagirathi Pattanayak, Prafulla Chandra Pattanayak, Jambuvati and Krishna Devi were arrested but Jambuvati and Krishna Devi were released in the same evening. Jambuvati moved to Jharsuguda and with Tulsi Devi wife of Bihariram, organized ladies to enforce prohibition. It was her remarkable effort at Jharsuguda that many Harijan women participated in the movement to eradicate the social evil. She emerged as a leading lady of the locality and came in contact with important personalities of Odisha.

Jambuvati organized and led people in freedom struggle. At Jharsuguda she organized freedom fighters to stage picketing against the sale of foreign liquor. This had the desired effect which motivated Harijan women to participate in the picketing. Later she was given the responsibility to collect funds for the 'Seva Dal' and train its volunteers whose objective was to arouse the spirit of freedom struggle among the women in Bargarh. Along with many freedom fighters, she left for Cuttack where they organized a massive Satyagraha. During Civil Disobedience Movement, she was one of the main leaders to

distribute the pamphlets of Congress propaganda. On 8 July 1932 Satyagrahis staged Dharna at Bargarh, they were all arrested, sent to Patna jail except Jambuvati who was put in Sambalpur jail. At the time of Individual Satyagraha in August, 1933, she picketed before foreign clothes shops at Marwadipara in Sambalpur and foreign liquor shops in Bargarh. On 22 September 1933 she was arrested along with her husband and son and got rigorous imprisonment. She was sent to Bhagalpur jail in Bihar for five months while her husband and son to Patna Central Jail. According to Debata, "In Bhagalpur jail Sarala Devi was undergoing a term of imprisonment. Jambuvati Devi and Sarala Devi spent the days with good harmony and weaving khadi clothes and doing other reformatory works." (Debata 2019:73) She with her husband and son joined the group of volunteers in distributing relief to the victims of earthquake at Munger in Bihar in 1934. (Roy Chaudhury 1962:116) There she had the opportunity to meet and work as co-workers with Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Miraben, Jamunalal Bajaj, Bhagabati Devi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. It proved to be a turning phase in her political and social career as her activities covered the present three states of Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar (erstwhile Bengal Subah)

On 4 May 1934 she mobilized a group of Harijans in Jharsuguda to welcome Gandhi on his visit to Jharsuguda at Jharsuguda Railway Station. Jambuvati accompanied Gandhi in all his meetings and assignments. When Gandhi started Harijan Movement, she brought many Harijan women to meet Mahatma Gandhi. Thus she actively participated in Harijan movement from 1934 to 1942. She trained the volunteers in Bargarh for proposed Congress session in Puri. She was known as 'Ashram Mata' in Bargarh for her role in monitoring the Ashram. In 1938 she again joined Satyagraha in Sambalpur and was arrested along with her husband and son. Thus politically she remained very active and actively participated in Khadi movement, various picketing and establishment of Gandhian Society. She stimulated people's sentiment against the British Government by asking

them to use Indian goods and boycott foreign goods. In 1940 she set up a tribal Ashram at Amrapara in Santal Parganas in Bihar (now in Jharkhand) to educate tribal people and arouse national consciousness among them. During Quit India Movement 1942-1943, in spite of her ill-health she surrounded the District of Dumka in Bihar (now in Jharkhand) with her husband and son. On 17 August 1942 with slogan 'do or die' Jambuvati led procession holding a high tricolor accompanied by Prema Devi, wife of Srikrishna Prasad. They were arrested at Dumka but she was released on account of her ill-health. Unfortunately she suffered a massive heart stroke and died on 17th April 1943 at Dudhani (Dumka). (Gartia 1987:68-69, Supkar 2008:85). Gartia noted, "When she died her son and husband were in jail. None of them could do anything for her. Priests and Brahmins of Badyanath Dham carried her dead body to the crematorium. Ayodhya Prasad Mishra, a famous Congress Leader lit up the pyre. Many organizations and institutions held condolence meetings and mourned her death. Prafulla performed the last rites of his mother inside the jail." (Gartia 1987:69)

Conclusion :

Thus Jambuvati Bhagirathi with her husband and son contributed marvelous contributions to the freedom struggle. It was priceless and immeasurable. A noted scholar rightly pointed out that "It is the rarest of rare examples that a whole family jumped over the frying pan of the freedom movement and sacrificed their lives for the sake of the motherland." (Naik 2018:71) As a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Jambuvati Pattanayak with her husband and son actively participated in freedom struggle from Non-cooperation Movement to Independence of India. It is to be noted that they were not only active in undivided Sambalpur of Orissa but also in Santal Parganas of Bihar, now in Jharkhand and in Munger in distributing relief to the victims of earthquake in 1934. Historically Sambalpur formed the stream of militant nationalism in Indian Freedom Struggle and the name of Jambuvati Pattanayak with her husband Bhagirathi Pattanayak and son Prafulla Chandra

Pattanayak must be written with golden alphabets. In view of her chivalrous activities that covered the present three states of Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar (erstwhile Bengal Subah), the great lady Jambuvati Pattanayak deserves a magnificent place in the Annals of India Freedom Struggle.

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