

Women's Society Of Nandigram In The Freedom Movement (1905 - 1942)

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Abstract

All India Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in a message dated 02.01.1931:

"Among the areas of the country that sacrificed their lives for the independence of India, Medinipur district hold a glorious place. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to heroes and heroines who have endured endless suffering for the country. Independence will come. After the dust of the struggle is removed, we many small incidents. But we will never forget the bravery of Indians, especially Indian women. We cannot forget that has happened in Medinipur District."

A prominent partner in this glorious feat of the district's people is of course the people of Nandigram police station. The women's community of the district has participated directly and extensively in the freedom struggle in the salt Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience movement. The same is equally true in the case of Nandigram police station. The Swadeshi Movement to the August Movement they have participated in every movement and have set an example of sacrifice and suffering. The same is true in the case of Nandigram Police Station. On October 16, the day of the partition of Bengal, a hunger strike was observed in Nandigram, focusing on the partition of Bengal in 1905. Picketing by indigenous volunteers began the sale of British goods was stopped at the fairs. Mother and sisters broke their relics, bangles and threw them into the pond. If they joined the Swadeshi Movement, The non-cooperation program was to withdraw from all kinds of government institutions like schools, colleges, courts etc. The in the districts with housewives in the districts with out paying a single paise; handed over dishes of rice, rice worth 20-50 tax to the police without any hesitation. In the Nandigram salt satyagraha, 44 men and women were accepted as Satyagrahis. Although women did not have a direct role in the Quit India Movement. They were indirectly active in the Movement.

Key Words :- Women, Movement, Nandigram ,Freedom

Introduction

All India Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in a message dated 02.01.1931, - "Among the areas of the country that sacrificed their lives for the independence of India, Medinipur district holds a glorious place. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the heroes and heroines who have endured endless suffering for the country. Independence will come. After the dust of the struggle is removed, we may forget many small incidents. But we will never forget the bravery of the people of India, especially Indian women. And (we cannot forget that all this has happened in Medinipur District)."¹

A prominent partner in this glorious feat of the district's people is of course the people of Nandigram police station, especially the women's community of the police station. The women's community of the district has participated directly and extensively in the freedom struggle in the Salt Satyagraha and the civil disobedience movement. The same is equally true in the case of Nandigram police station. Yet, from the

Swadeshi movement to the August Revolution, they have participated in every movement and have set an example of sacrifice and suffering. We will try to briefly present that account.

Swadeshi Movement (1905 - 1911)

The Swadeshi movement of Bengal, which was determined to unsettle the settled fact of the partition of Bengal in 1905, did not immediately spread beyond Kolkata or the district and sub-district cities to the villages and towns. Yet on the 16th on the day of the partition of Bengal in October, arandhan was celebrated in Nandigram as per the schedule of the movement.²

This proves that anti-British patriotism had already awakened among the women of Nandigram. However, the Swadeshi movement broke out in the police station on a large scale in early 1908. Khudiram, the son of Damal of the Medinipur Gupta Samiti, had established several clubs for young people to play stick games in Bhagwanpur and nearby police stations from the Khejuri house of Digambar Nanda, the landlord of Mugberia. At that time, many young people of Nandigram joined them and participated in picketing against British goods in fairs and markets and propagated Swadeshi. An incident in April 1908. An eight-day Kartik fair was held in the premises of the Shitala temple of Baman Ara in Nandigram. As the picketing of Swadeshi volunteers led to the closure of the sale of British goods at the fair, the mothers and sisters who came to the fair broke their silk bangles and threw them into the pond, thereby signing their participation in the Swadeshi movement.³

Non - Cooperation Movement (1921 - 1922)

The first nationwide mass movement led by Gandhi was the Non-Cooperation Movement. The main program of Non-Cooperation was to withdraw from all government institutions such as schools, colleges, courts, etc. The provincial leadership of the movement was led by President Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and Secretary Kanthi's son Deshpran Birendranath Shasmal. And although Nandigram Thana is administratively part of Tamluk Sub-division, due to the distance of the Haldi River, this Thana is more closely related to Bhagwanpur and Khejuri Thana, which are adjacent to Kanthi Sub-division. On top of that, at the beginning of the movement, Birendranath's public meeting organized by the youth of the Thana in the premises of Jankinath Temple stirred up the residents of the Thana for non-cooperation. At his call, the wealthy families of the villages of Shivrampur, Hanubhuanya, Hanschada, Patna etc. of this Thana donated a lot of money to Tilak Swarajya Bhandar and many talented students and teachers of the police station left school and college. It is worth mentioning that among them were the students of Nandigram's Carbikel Institution and Headmaster Nikunjabihari Maiti and Assistant Headmaster Pareshnath Maiti. From this, it is clear that patriotism and anti-British sentiments are strongly awakened among all the men and women of the police station. The proof of this is the union board tax boycott movement of the district residents under the leadership of Deshapran without the support of the Congress during this non-cooperation movement. It is astonishing to think that without paying a single rupees of tax, the housewives of the district are handing over

dishes, rice and rice worth twenty to fifty rupees to the police who are confiscating the goods. In this movement, the women of Nandigram have also fulfilled their worthy social responsibility. How much pain it is for the housewives to leave their household goods, how can one measure it? This inflexible suffering and unity of the men and women of Nandigram and the entire district forced the British government to give up. The government withdrew the union board. Freedom fighter Kamala Dasgupta wrote 'At home' for good reason. Many women at home quietly helped the movement, unnoticed by everyone. Even if they did not do direct work in the front, the value of this silent donation was not small at that time.⁴

However, after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the direct participation of women of Nandigram police station in the formation work directed by Gandhi has become a glory in history. Kanthi and Tamluk subdivisions were flooded in the devastating floods of 1923 and 1926. For the purpose of relief work, the 'Medinipur Flood Relief Society' was formed under the chairmanship of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy. After the relief service, with the additional money from the relief fund, two Khadi centers were established at Jukhia in Kanthi and at Kulapara in Nandigram with the encouragement of Acharya Roy. The 'Deshbandhu Khadi Mission' formed in Kulapara was managed by Gyanendranath Mishra and his wife Basantilata Devi.⁵

In their 5 centers, 22 weavers wove hand-spun yarn sarees, dhota and jama than. More than two hundred women's missions in 18 nearby villages. They would take cotton or flax and spin the yarn. Women also had partial participation in weaving.

Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience (1930 - 1934)

The second mass movement led by Gandhi was the Salt Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the first movement, Gandhi only called for non-cooperation. In this movement, he broke the government laws and entered into a face-to-face struggle. The first and main program of civil disobedience was the Salt Satyagraha. This was accompanied by tax boycotts, illegal public meetings, picketing at excise shops, etc. The Salt Satyagraha began on April 6, 1930, under the leadership of Gandhi. On 05/03/1931, the movement was paused for a few months in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact for the purpose of the Round Table Conference, and later the movement continued until 1934.

On 6th April, the Salt Satyagraha began at Pichaboni in Kanthir and Narghat in Tamluk in Midnapore district. The day before, many men and women had donated money and valuables to the Satyagraha at a public meeting in the coconut garden field near the Borghima temple. Among them, we can get an idea of the patriotic sentiment of the women's community of the subdivision on that day from the ornaments and money donated by many women, including the gold necklace of Madhusudan Banerjee's wife Pushparani Devi, the gold earrings of Ajay Mukherjee's sister-in-law Durgarani Devi.⁶

The first day passed without incident, but from the second day, police harassment began. There was vandalism at the salt center, beating of satyagrahis, temporary detention, etc. From the 15th, leaders and satyagrahis including Ajay Kumar Mukherjee, Satish Chandra Samanta were arrested. Gradually, many salt centers were established throughout the subdivision.

Now the topic is Nandigram. In the preparation phase of Satyagraha, 44 men and women took up the cause as Satyagrahis in a public meeting organized by the Kulapara Youth Association accepted. Among them were the organizer of the Khadi Mission, Basantilata Mishra, and some respectable women. Later, in the Narghat Salt Center and in the 26 notable salt centers of the police station, along with the men, women not only participated in the Satyagraha, but also led and conducted the movement. They also faced beatings, torture and arrests. Among them, Chikanbala Jana, Nityabala Gol and others were appointed as directors. The list of women leaders of the police station is given below ⁷

1st Union - Mokshada Bhunia,

2nd Union - Umasundari Parya and Soudamini Rath,

3rd Union - Soudamini Maiti, Nityabala Gol. This Nityabala Gol later became the 4th director of the Sub - division.

4th Union - Mayarani Das, Ranibala Das and Jamunabala Roy,

5th Union - Maynabati Pal, Jamuna Pal, Chikanbala Jana, Chinmayi Das and Satyawati Devi,

6th Union - Saraswati Pradhan,

7th Union - Chikanbala Jana,

8th Union - Kumudini Maiti ,

9th Union- Giribala, Kadambini and Khullana Pradhan, Hiranmayi and Nistarini Das, Nimaibala, Yaminiabala and Prasanna Kumari Maiti, Durgamani Bera, Khullana Pramanika, Sayambara Dasi,

10th Union - Giribala Giri, Sarojini Dasi, Bhagwati Devi, Jabakusum Bhakta Das, Tilottama and Soudamini Maiti.

11th Union - Saraju and Narmadabala Khatua.

12th Union - Chikanbala Jana, she was the female director of the police station.

13th Union - Swayambari Bera, Sumitra Das.

14th Union - Pramila Jana.

After the failure of the Gol Table Conference, the government of Gandhi in early 1932 they arrested other leaders and banned the Congress organization. However, the movement continued under a different name. For example, a Samar Parishad was formed in the Tamluk subdivision. Nandigram police station also became a stronghold of the struggle under the leadership of the Samar Parishad. From a brief account of that struggle, we can get some idea of the scope and intensity of their struggle.⁸

- 1) The number of Satyagrahis associated with the 97 salt centers of the police station is 1239.
- 2) There have been 43 campaigns to hoist the national flag at the police station government office.
- 3) The value of the goods seized and looted due to non-payment of tax of 437 taka is about 4000 taka.
- 4) Congress office and private residence set on fire. 15 houses burnt down. Two haystacks including that of Shyamasundari Pradhan of Shivrampur village caught fire.
- 5) Beatings, arrests, detentions, and imprisonments are numerous.
- 6) Many families from 37 villages have been displaced. Among them, 79 have died due to various reasons.
- 7) Resignation of 1 Dafadar and most of the Chowkidars of 10 unions in protest of the atrocities.
- 8) 3 people were martyred in beatings and shootings.
- 9) 3 women were raped. 5 women were victims of attempted rape and assault.

Now we will look at the details of the participation and leadership of the heroic women of Nandigram in the movement.

1. On 18/04/1931, the Salt Act was violated under the leadership of Swayambori Bera at Babduari Khalpar. The Satyagrahis continued their movement amidst police harassment.⁹
2. Salute to the brave girl Satyawati. Despite being a servant of the tyrannical police officer and his henchmen, the woman who earned her living in Terpekhia Bazaar used to secretly convey the news of police operations to the revolutionaries. Once in Terpekhia Bazaar the picketing Satyagrahis were rendered unconscious by the police beating. Satyawati rushed to their aid with maternal love and arranged for them to be sent to the Congress camp. In this way, the inspector found out Satyawati's true identity. When the Satyagrahis came to the picketing at the next market, the inspector brutally whipped both of them and Satyawati and arrested them. They were sentenced to 3 months in prison each.¹⁰
3. On 05/03/1932, 25 men and 70 women satyagrahis were present at Khodambari Salt Centre. The audience was about 1500. The police arrested 20 of them. In the trial, 9 men were sentenced to 4 months imprisonment and 11 women to imprisonment from 2 to 7 days. The women sentenced were Giribala Pradhan, Kadambini Pradhan, Nistarini Das, Hiranmayi Das, Nityabala Maiti, Prasanna Kumari Maiti, Yaminibala Maiti, Khullana Pradhan, Durgamayi Bera and 2 others.¹¹

¹⁾ 11/2.1932 Three leading local satyagrahis, Chikanbala Jana, Chinmayi Das and Satyawati Devi, were arrested for violating the law at the Mohammadpur Salt Plantation. They were sentenced to 3 months in prison on trial.¹²

2) On 18/2/1932, a large number of people gathered at Ashdtala centre under the leadership of Saraswati Pradhan to protest against the law. A large force of the Sub-division Police was also deployed there. Many

male and female Satyagrahis were injured by their blows with sticks, batons and heavy kicks. Later, 18 male and 12 female Satyagrahis were arrested.¹³

3) In March 1932, Jamunabala Roy, Mayarani Das, Giribala Giri and Jabakusum Bhakta Das led the Satyagraha against the Salt Act. The procession in this second Satyagraha at Hanschada Kendra was attended by about 1,050 men and women from Unions No. 3, No. 4 and No. 10. More than a hundred were injured in the police's reckless beatings, and 5/6 were rendered unconscious. About 500 women Satyagrahis and processionists they were detained by police on the Magrajpur road, 6 km away, until midnight and then released.¹⁴

4) On 4/4/1932 and 6/4/1932, Mainamati Pal and Jamuna Pal, who were leading the Boyal Salt Centre, were brutally beaten by the police.¹⁵

5) In addition, on 20/5/1932, a salt satyagraha was held in Burunda under the leadership of Mokshada Bhuya. On 4/5/1932, Soudamini Maiti of No. 3, Tilottama Mishra and Narmada Khatua of No. 10 and Swayambara Bera of No. 13 disobeyed the law at various centers of the police station. Again, Narmada Khatua and Saryubala Khatua led the salt satyagraha at Gholpukuria center and Pramila Jana disobeyed the law at Chakchillagram (6/5/32). The disobedience of the law here is particularly notable because the police opened fire here, in which Arjun Mandal died a few days later after being injured. On the other hand, the dictator of the police station, Chikanbala Jana, was arrested for disobeying the law at Tokopura and served a prison sentence.

I will conclude the account of the heroic role of the Nandigram police station heroines with a list of women who were imprisoned.¹⁶

<u>Arrested</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Term of imprisonment</u>	<u>Details of complaint</u>
18.08.32	Chikonbala Jana	Dekutya	6 month	Presiding over the police conference
15.02.32	Soudamini Bhunia	Do	4 month	Black flag to Loboan Commission
Do	Rohini Das	Do	Do	Do
Do	Sovamayee Das	Anantapur	Do	Do
Do	Chikanbala Bharati	Gopalpur	Do	Do
Do	Kailash Mitra	Dekutya	Do	Do
11.02.32	Chikanbala Jana	Dekutya	3 month	Salt satyagraha
Do	Chinmayee Das	Goyalberia	Do	Do
Do	Satyabati Devi	Terapekhia	Do	Do
04.06.32	Nityabala Gol	Kandapasra	Do	Picketing(5 th Director of sub – division)
15.09.32	Saradamoyee Jana	Tajpur	Do	Going to the police station

Do	Matangini Karan	Debipur	Do	Do
26.01.32	Mayarani Das	Nandapur	2 month	Valley lifting in government offices
Do	Jamunabala Das	Do	Do	Do
18.02.32	Bijaya Das	Manuchak	Do	Salt satyagraha
Do	Giribala Pradhan	Khodambari	7 Days	Do
Do	Kadambini Pradhan	Do	Do	Do
Do	Khullana Pradhan	Do	Do	Do
Do	Hiranmoyee Das	Do	Do	Do
Do	Nimaibala Maity	Do	Do	Do
Do	Prasannakumari Maity	Do	Do	Do
19.02.32	Swayambak Maity Manduria	Do	Do	Do
18.02.32	Durgamoyee Bera	Jibanpur	2 Days	Do
Do	Nistarini Das	Do	Do	Do
Do	Jaminibala Maity	Khodambari	Do	Do
Do	Khullana Pramanik	Pathuria	1 Day	Do
15.10.42	Saratbala Mondal	Shadatala	6 month	Do
23.10.42	Basantikumari Giri	Kanungochak	7 month	Do
16.11.42	Rohini Bala	Dekutya	9 month	Do
04.06.32	Nityabala Jana	Do	2 month	Picketing in the market

Quit India Movement

In conclusion, it would be a crime not to mention the role of the women's society of Nandigram in the Quit India Movement. It is true that women were prohibited from directly participating in this movement. Although this rule was followed in the struggle of the district with few exceptions, the women's society everywhere was indirectly active in the movement. Their main task was to stand by the migrants by providing food, services and shelter. At the same time, they organized the women's society of the area in fearless sacrifice and suffering. Charubala Pramanik, Raibala Pal, Rajbala Chakraborty and Subhasini Samanta led this work in Nandigram.¹⁷

In this movement, 99 people were arrested or detained at Nandigram Police Station, 77 were sentenced to prison. At least 16 houses were burned to the ground. Money and rice were looted from about 250 people. The looted assets ranged from 1 taka to 4000 taka per person and up to 150 maunds of rice. 10 people were raped and 7 more women were assaulted. 16 patriots were martyred, many were injured.

Ajay Kumar said in an interview that women have a great love for houses, houses, property, and even the jhata kulo.¹⁸

The women of Nandigram have made such huge sacrifices, the loss of loved ones, and the loss of women's dignity for the liberation of the country, which is nothing less than a direct struggle. In this way, the women of Nandigram, as well as the women of the district and the country, played an important role in the direct and indirect struggle for the liberation of the country, and today we have the taste of independence.

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