



Annapurna Maharana : A Philanthropist

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The girl child born on 3rd November, 1917 in the family of Nabakrushna Choudhury, the freedom fighter was later became the torch bearer of social awareness and reformation in the history of Odisha. Annapurna Maharana popularly known as Chuni Appa has left golden footprints in the pages of Indian independence movement. Annapurna was influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation. From the childhood she had the privilege to be a member of *Banara Sena*, the specific group of children dedicated themselves for the success of freedom movement.



Annapurna had the privilege to come in contact with great leaders like Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das and Acharya Harihar. Gopabandhu Choudhury and Rama Devi were the parents of Annapurna. Her brother Manmohan Choudhury, uncle Nabakrushna Choudhury and her Aunt, Malati Devi sacrificed themselves for the cause of Indian independence. Hence the influence of

patriotism was fostered in the life of young girl Annapurna. She inherited the courage to serve the people from her family members.

Her father Gopabandhu Choudhury was a Magistrate as appointed by the British Government with high salary and privileges. The clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi insisted Gopabandhu Choudhury to resign from the job and to join actively in the independence movement. Annapurna was highly inspired by Pandit Gopabandhu Das to serve people for their upliftment. She was associated with the promotion of Odia Newspaper, 'The Samaja', a weekly publication which was later converted to a daily newspaper publication to propagate the spirit of patriotism.

Annapurna for the first time was arrested by the British Government in the year 1930 for her association with Salt Movement. She attended the Indian National Congress meeting at Karachi in the year 1931. She was an young girl of 14 years. She had the opportunity for association with Simant Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. She



was an active member of Indian National Congress and had the privilege of attending all conferences. Annapurna actively participated during the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Odisha in the year 1934. She was one of the co-ordinators of visits of Mahatma Gandhi to Odisha during 1934 and 1938. Her leadership and patriotism was appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi, She was inspired by receiving a number of letters from Mahatma Gandhi for planning of independence movement in Odisha. She was a good singer and was winning the hearts of freedom fighters by singing patriotic songs. Mahatma Gandhi was the friend, philosopher and guide of Annapurna. After the independence of India, she was not interested for any position or power through politics. She engaged herself in the service for the poor people and creation of social awareness. She was very industrious and devotion to work was her philosophy. Simple living and high thinking was adopted by Annapurna. Punctuality and discipline was the philosophy of her life.

Annapurna has been accepted as a great philanthropist of India. Self dedication to the optimum limit was experienced from the life of Annapurna. She inspired people to be united during the war with China and Pakistan. She was associated with the mission of Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan for conversion of hearts of dacoits of Chambal Valley in Madhya Pradesh. Till her death she was a worshipper of social service and selfless dedication.

The literary excellence of Annapurna was recognized by her writing “Dasyu Hrudayara Debata” and “Amruta Anubhab”. “Dasyu Hrudayara Debata” was created by her narrating the experiences of Chambal Valley Mission. “Amruta Anubhab” was dedicated with the philosophy of Vinoba Bhave. She has also written a number of books narrating her experiences during freedom movement. She also translated a number of writings of Mahatma Gandhi in Odia.

She was a great orator. She was highly influenced by her mother Rama Devi for successful organisation of different movements against drugs, atrocities against women and downtrodden people. She was conferred with Doctorate degree and was awarded with Utkal Ratna. She was actively associated with different social organizations i.e. Kasturba Gandhi Rastreeya Smaraka Nidhi, Utkala Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Sarbodaya Relief Committee, Utkal Nabajeeban Mandali, Utkal Sarbodaya Mandali, Acharya Harihara Trust, Nagari Lipi Parishad and other organizations dedicated for social awareness.

The life of Annapurna Maharana was a message of selfless dedication and patriotism to the people of the society. She was married to Sarat Chandra Maharana in the year 1942. During such period the inter-caste marriage was not accepted in the society. Annapurna Choudhury was born in Karan family but married to Sarat Chandra Maharana of goldsmith family. It was a bold step taken by Annapurna Choudhury to end the casteism in the society. Hence Annapurna Choudhury was known as Annapurna Maharana. Her two sons Gyana Deba and Karma Deba are Professors in Physics and were conferred with Doctorate degrees. Annapurna Maharana breathed her last on the 31st December, 2012.

While analyzing the life of Annapurna Maharana it is evident that the simple living and high thinking is the basic way of human life. Being a woman she never felt herself incompetent to join actively in freedom struggle to disseminate the message of reformation in all walks of daily life. She was a successful philanthropist by dedicating her life for the upliftment of Odisha and displaying the example of worthy life amidst enormous onerous obstacles.

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