



75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



# India achieved independence with the mantra of unity in diversity

At one time in history, India's cultural heritage and its diversity in the form of language, food, and dress were considered a weakness. But in our quest for independence, we proved to the world that diversity is our strength. During the independence movement, be it Gujarat or Bengal, the region of the south or the northern part of the country, they all unitedly exhibited the belief in 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat'. It raised the consciousness of the society and 'unity in diversity' became a mantra for freedom fighters ...

“ We are currently celebrating the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. In hundreds of years of slavery, what was our greatest strength in such a long struggle for freedom? Our strength was - our habit of not giving up! Our strength was - our rites of thinking and living for the country, for humanity, rising above our vested interests! In the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, we are moving forward with this spirit. ”  
- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

**W**e achieved independence after great struggle and sacrifice. With the purpose to pay homage to its freedom fighters and enlightening the citizens with the glorious past of the country, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is being celebrated. 75 years ago, India led the independence movement through the medium of non-violence and demonstrated to the world that freedom could be achieved without bloodshed. Under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, started on the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi more than 25,000 events across the country have been organized.

In the series of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, this time read the stories of Sumant Mehta, Sushila Chain Trehan, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, and Alekh Patra, who sacrificed their all for the freedom of Maa Bharati.

## A London returned physician who fought for independence

**Born: 1 July 1877, Died: 15 December 1968**

Inspired by his wife, Sumant Mehta dedicated his life to the independence of India. He was also a physician who worked for the upliftment of the poor. He completed his studies in medicine in England. He was married before going to England for studies. After returning from there, Dr. Sumant Mehta was appointed Chief Medical Officer in Baroda Raj.

In his absence, his wife Sharda Mehta devoted herself to writing articles in newspapers and magazines, translating and writing short books on children's literature. However, Sharda Mehta was not satisfied and she wanted to do something for the nation. On seeing his wife's dedication he was inspired to work for the independence of the nation. After which he met Mahatma Gandhi along with Sharda and became actively involved in the independence movement. During his visit to Europe, he also met revolutionaries like Madam Cama, Shyamji Krishna Verma, and Virendra Nath Chatterjee who left a lasting impression on him. The religious texts of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda and their works also had a great influence on him. In fact, Sumant Mehta's wife Sharda Mehta was no ordinary woman.

Impressed by her role as a wife, mother, sister,

and daughter, as well as her contribution as a social worker, academician, and great freedom fighter, Mahatma Gandhi said- "In his next life he would like to be born from her womb". Sumant Mehta actively participated in the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. At the time of this Satyagraha, he ran the day-to-day administration of Sarabhaun Ashram successfully which impressed Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi a lot.

**Sumant Mehta actively participated in the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928.**

After this, he actively participated in the independence movement of India and went to jail many times. He was arrested by the police for participating in the civil disobedience movement and was lodged in Jalalpur Jail, Gujarat. Due to his involvement in the independence movement, he had to spend 5 years in Sabarmati, Visapur, and Nashik jails. Being an environmentalist and nature

worshiper, he also emphasized desi and ayurvedic treatment.

He established an ashram in Sertha village near Kalol in 1936 and worked lifelong for the welfare and upliftment of farmers, laborers, and tribals. After independence, when there was a scramble for getting power and titles, Sharda and her husband chose the path of people's welfare and devoted their lives to it.

## Alekh Patra started participating in the freedom struggle from the age of 18

**Born: 1 July 1923, Died: 17 November 1999**

Alekh Patra, who took part in the Indian freedom struggle, was one of the prominent leaders. He also encouraged the citizens to participate in the civil rights and environmental protection movements in different parts of Odisha. Born on July 1, 1923, in Puri, Odisha, Alekh Patra was imbued with the spirit of patriotism from his childhood and he started participating in the freedom struggle movement at the age of 18. It is said that during the freedom struggle, he along with his friends set fire to Nimapada police station.

During the incident, police opened fire to stop the protesters, killing one of their close associates on the spot. Alekh Patra was arrested on the spot and imprisoned in Puri jail. There he was tortured but he was a man of strong will and did not deviate from his path. After his release from prison, he continued his underground struggle against British colonialism and moved to Calcutta. There he worked as a domestic servant for a man but did not let his underground activities stop.

However, he could not stay in Kolkata for long as he wanted to openly participate in the

freedom struggle along with Acharya Harihar and Gobbandhu Das. At the same time, his other freedom fighter friends also wanted him not to work underground and to come back and openly participate in the war of independence against the British. He decided to come back to Puri from Kolkata. While he was returning to Puri from Kolkata, he was arrested by the police at the station and sent to jail again. While in jail, he used to follow the instructions of Mahatma Gandhi and spun yarn and weaved khadi to make his own cloth. He also cleaned the toilets to promote cleanliness. After his release from jail, he went to Wardha to take training in Swaraj, Home Administration, and other Sarvodaya functions.

After returning to Odisha from there, he started working for social reform and after the independence of India, he was awarded many honors by the Central and State Governments. Even after the independence of India, he continued to work for the welfare of the people and remained constantly active. He died on November 17, 1999, at the age of 76.

## Amarendra Nath Chatterjee adopted the revolutionary method for the independence of the country

**Born: 1 July 1880, Died: 4 September 1957**

Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, considered to be one of the top leaders of the Yugantar group, was a famous revolutionary who had the responsibility of raising funds for carrying out the movement of this organization. His revolutionary activities were mainly concentrated in Bihar, Orissa, and the United Provinces. During his studies, he met like-minded people who believed in adopting a revolutionary method to drive out the British. Among these, the names of Upendranath Banerjee and Hrishikesh Kanjilal are prominent.

Amarendra Nath Chatterjee is one of the icons of the Indian freedom struggle who wanted to liberate India from British slavery on the strength of revolution. That is why he joined the Yugantar group whose main activities were to gather youngsters through its branches at various places, to make them mentally and physically strong so that they could fight the British head-on. Not only that, this organization was also involved in secretly making bombs, imparting weapons training, and killing evil British officers.

The active members of this organization

**Amarendra Nath Chatterjee's name is included in the list of the warriors of the Indian freedom struggle who wanted to free India from the slavery of the British on the basis of revolution**

also killed the Indian officials whom they considered the backbone of the British or the traitors of the country. Amarendra Nath Chatterjee was born on July 1, 1880, in Uttarpada, Hooghly, West Bengal in the house of Upendra Nath Chatterjee. Initially, he sided with Jatindranath Mukherjee in revolutionary activities. Later in 1907, he met Aurobindo Ghosh and he became fully dedicated to liberating the country from British slavery. It is believed that it was Aurobindo who encouraged him to raise funds to help the revolutionaries. It is said that he went underground for 5 years in 1915 and traveled from one place to another in disguise.

The British had also announced a reward of Rs 10,000 on his head at that time. Not only that, Nanibala Devi, the first woman political prisoner of Bengal, was also a distant relative of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and she was inspired by him and became actively involved in revolutionary activities. She rented a house in Chandan Nagar and gave shelter to Amarendra Nath Chatterjee as well as the other revolutionaries of the Yugantar group, Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, Shiv Bhushan Dutt, etc. In 1923, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee remained in jail for a few days, and after that, he escalated his activism in other ways. He remained active even after the independence of India and died on 4 September 1957 at the age of 77 in West Bengal. A statue of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee has been erected on the main road of his hometown Uttarpada.

## **Sushila Chain Trehan** served the country till her last breath

**Born: 1 July 1923, Died: 28 September 2011**

**S**ushila Chain Trehan, along with other women independence activists fought hard for the freedom of the country. She not only faced police torture while valiantly fighting for the freedom of the country but also undertook a campaign to educate girls in Punjab which was considered taboo in those days. Born on July 1, 1923, in Pathankot, Punjab, Sushila was the youngest of four siblings. His father, Mathuradas Trehan was a contractor by profession and was one of the founders of the Congress party in Pathankot.

At the same time, he was a prominent member of the Arya Samaj. When Sushila was growing up she developed an affinity for the cause of Indian independence. But her father died under mysterious circumstances. During this period she found a book and after reading it she became very passionate about India's independence. Sushila was also inspired by the brave tales of Bhagat Singh. She met a freedom fighter named Shakunlata Azad at the age of 18 after which she left her home to fight for the independence of the nation. She went underground and started making the strategy for independence. In her struggle, she also has to undergo through police lathi charge. Sushila had made up her mind to fight for India's independence and any kind of adversity could not break her resolve.

In order to awaken the spirit of education in women and make them self-reliant, she used to travel long distances by bicycle to distant villages. She encouraged the women there to cook, sew, and clean. At that time cycling by girls was considered taboo but she was not one to give up. Even after the independence of India, she continued to promote education for children and opened three girls' and a co-education school. She very well understood that the country must be free from the mentality of social evils after liberation from colonial powers. That is why she continued to work for the betterment of society from the time of India's independence till her death on September 28, 2011. ■