

RAMA DEVI WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY

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Rama Devi Women's University is named after Maa Rama Devi as an humble tribute to the values and sacrifices she stood for. Rama Devi Choudhury, adoringly called Maa (Mother) by the people of Orissa, was a celebrated freedom fighter and a social reformer. Born on the 3rd December, 1899 at Cuttack, she inherited a great legacy as the daughter of Gopal Ballav Das and the niece of Utkal Gaurab Madhusudan Das. At the tender age of 15, she married Gopabandhu Choudhury, then a Deputy Collector and later a freedom fighter. The historic day of Dola Purnima, the 23rd March, 1921 marked the turning point in Rama Devi's life, when she was fortunate to meet Gandhiji and Kasturba in the Women's Meeting at Binod Behari. They inspired her to dedicate herself for the cause of the country. Rama Devi with her son Manamohan and young daughter Annapurna in her arms religiously followed the footsteps of her firebrand husband and plunged, heart and soul, into the Non-cooperation movement. In 1928, she left Cuttack and stayed at the Alaka Ashram, Jagatsinghpur, to organise constructive activities of spinning of Khadi, prohibition of liquor and removal of untouchability.

Rama Devi was imprisoned on the 8th November, 1930 for leading the Salt Satyagraha at Srijanga (Balasore) and Kujanga (Jagatsinghpur). Two years later at Cuttack, she was arrested again while taking the Solemn Oath on the 26th January, 1932 for complete independence of the country. After release from the prison, Rama Devi founded Seva Ghar (now a College) at Ramachandrapur, Bari to reconstruct the flood ravaged villages along the Brahmani river coast. Gandhiji blessed her noble endeavour and inaugurated the ashram of austerity on the 20th May, 1934 in the midst of his famous Harijan Padayatra in Orissa. It was a momentous event of modern India when Rama Devi was arrested once again on the 9th August, 1942, the day Gandhiji gave the clarion call of Quit India. The scene was soul-stirring as she went to Cuttack Jail with her whole family consisting of her husband, son, daughter, brother-in-law Nabakrushna, sister-in-law Malati Devi, and son-in-law Sarat Chandra. On the eve of the independence, Rama Devi was nominated the State Convener of Kasturba National Memorial Trust and she took the opportunity to launch several programmes for the emancipation and empowerment of women. After independence, Rama Devi dedicated herself entirely to the cause of Bhoodan and Gramdan movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Along with her husband she travelled on foot about 4000 kilometers across the state to propagate the message of gifting land and wealth to the landless and poor. In recognition of her selfless services to the nation, Rama Devi was honoured with the Jamnalal Bajaj Award on the 4th November, 1981 and the Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris causa) by Utkal University on the 16th April, 1984. A remarkable saga of courage, dedication, and supreme sacrifice came to an end on the 22nd July, 1985, the day Rama Devi breathed her last