

# MEDHA PATKAR



Medha Patkar is a well known social activist of India. She was born on 1st December, 1954, in Maharashtra in a freedom fighter's family to Indu and Vasant Khanolkar. Her father actively fought in the Indian Independence Movement. Her mother was a member of Swadar, an organization set up to help and assist women suffering difficult circumstances arising out of financial, educational and health related problems.

She completed her M.A. in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) before she became active as a social worker. She left her Ph. D. in the midst and got actively involved in the agitations conducted by tribals and peasants of Maharashtra, M.P. and Gujarat. Later on she formed an organization named Narmada Bachao Andolan. She got married to Mr. Patkar but the marriage didn't survive and they divorced.

On 28th March, 2006, Medha went on a hunger strike, in protest of the decision taken by the authorities, to increase the height of the Narmada dam. The strike continued for a long period of 20 days and finally came to an end on April 17, 2006. The Supreme Court rejected the plea of Narmada Bachao Andolan to stop the construction of the dam.

She was again arrested on 2nd December, 2006, by the police at Singur in West Bengal, for her active involvement in the protest against getting the hold of farmland. She was detained because the police officers thought that she might provoke people, thus leading to law and order problem. Although she had studied at an Institute run by TATA, yet she protested against the setting up of the plant at Singur. Later, when she was returning from the campaign, she had to face the public agitation. But she claimed it to be government supported agitation.

The Madhya Pradesh Government alleged the Narmada Bachao Andolan of receiving foreign funds and using them for unclear purposes. They claimed that the money that was obtained was being used by the organization to hamper the rehabilitation process.

Medha Patkar openly supported the anti-corruption campaign of Anna Hazare. In support of Jan Lokpal bill the renowned social activist said, "If the Congress is in a suicidal mood on this issue, what can anyone do for it?"

Medha Patkar is one of the recipients of Right Livelihood Award for the year 1991. She received the 1999 M.A. Thomas National Human Rights Award from Vigil India Movement. She also received numerous other awards, including the Deena Nath Mangeshkar Award, Mahatma Phule Award, Goldman Environment Prize, and Green Ribbon Award for Best International Political Campaigner by BBC, and the Human Right's Defender's Award from Amnesty International.

On the other hand Medha's refusal to participate against a proposed Jaitpur Nuclear Power Project, in her home region of Konkan, has made local activist there unhappy and sad. One Konkan activist accused her of highlighting issues to "further her own purpose", and then abandoning them. Medha Patkar has also filed a PIL against Lavasa project in High Court of Bombay as a member of National Alliance for People's Movement. Anna Hazare is also a member of the same alliance. Medha Patkar has joined several campaigns for social cause and is quite vocal about her opinion.