



# **SPEAKS**

## **Valiant Freedom Fighters of India**

**Compiled by  
Prime Point Srinivasan  
C. Badri**

**Prime Point Foundation  
Chennai**

## PreSense Speaks | Freedom Fighters of India

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[www.primepointfoundation.in](http://www.primepointfoundation.in)  
[www.corpezine.com](http://www.corpezine.com)  
[editor@corpezine.com](mailto:editor@corpezine.com)

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## **Introduction**

## Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The First Edition PreSense100

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Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam  
Former President of India



10, Rajaji Marg  
New Delhi-110011

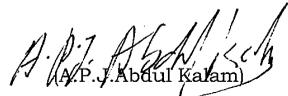
### FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100<sup>th</sup> Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28<sup>th</sup> May 2015

  
(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

## **Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones**

- Dec 1999 Launch of Prime Point Foundation, Publisher of the ezine.
- Feb 2006 Launch of ezine, PreSense online by Dr Y S Rajan.
- Aug 2006 Integration of Podcast with the ezine contents.
- Aug 2007 Introduction of Guest Editors.
- Feb 2008 Second Anniversary Edition with Dr Abdul Kalam's exclusive interview. Masthead changed.
- Apr 2008 First ezine to become 'Media Partner' for a global event held at London.
- July 2008 Introduction of cartoons – Cartoon Character 'Prince' launched by Dr Abdul Kalam.
- Sep 2008 Change in layout, introducing photographs on the cover.
- Jan 2010 Ezine's new initiative 'Education Loan Task Force' (ELTF) launched to create awareness among students and parents.
- May 2010 Ezine's second initiative to honour top performing Parliamentarians, with the *Sansad Ratna* Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50<sup>th</sup>) Edition launched.
- Feb 2011 Diamond Jubilee (60<sup>th</sup>) Edition.

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

- Apr 2012 Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from 'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations.'
- Apr 2013 Tamil Nadu Governor launched a special edition on the Indian Parliament, coinciding with the *Sansad Ratna* Awards.

## PreSense Speaks | Freedom Fighters of India

- Jun 2013 Platinum Jubilee (75<sup>th</sup>) Edition launched by the youth at three places simultaneously, across the nation.
- Jun 2015 100<sup>th</sup> Edition - PreSense 100 released in print format.
- Mar 2016 Ezine's third initiative 'Digital Journalists Association of India' (DiJAI) launched.
- Jun 2016 Second edition of PreSense 100+ released in print format
- Dec 2017 Ezine's fourth initiative 'Digital Security Association of India' (DiSAI) launched.
- Mar 2018 Third edition of Digest PreSense130 released in print format.
- Aug 2019 Fourth edition of Digest PreSense150 launched in pdf format.
- May 2021 PreSense Speaks Series – First volume released on Communication (compilation of articles published earlier)
- Sep 2021 Fifth edition of Digest PreSense175 in 6 volumes released.
- Jul 2022 PreSense Speaks Series – Second volume released compiling the Editorials published between 2020 and 2022
- Aug 2022 PreSense Speaks Series – Third volume launched – Compilation of articles on Indian freedom fighters

The Journey Continues.....

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## Editorial Team – August 2022

Publisher and Managing Editor	<b>K. Srinivasan</b> (Prime Point Srinivasan)
Editor	<b>Priyadharshni Rahul,</b> Advocate, Supreme Court of India, New Delhi
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Cartoon Editor	<b>Triambak Sharma,</b> Editor, Cartoon Watch, Raipur
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Technology Advisor	<b>Srinivas Gopal,</b> Technology expert



## Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

**Prime Point Foundation**, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan (popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 22 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication, and digital journalism.

The Foundation has formed 5 initiatives to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial and focussed on youth.

**PreSense:** The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till July 2022, the Foundation has published 185 editions. This is a digital-only magazine. Digests, containing select articles up to 150 editions of the

eMagazine, have so far been published. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest of articles up to 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008. PreSense has published a Digest of select articles published up to 175 editions in 8 volumes.

India Book of Records has recognised PreSense for publishing maximum number of digital only eMagazine since 2006 through voluntary efforts. .

**Sansad Ratna Awards:** This is a flagship initiative started in 2010 to honour top performing Parliamentarians every year, based on various performance parameters, and selected by a Jury Committee of eminent Parliamentarians. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the first edition of the Awards event in May 2010. Till 2022, the Foundation has conducted 12 editions and presented 86 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner up to the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. 10<sup>th</sup> Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Editions were held at New Delhi.



India Book of Records (IBR) has recognised Sansad Ratna Awards for maximum number of Parliamentary Awards (86) given and maximum number of award events (12) by the civil society based on the performance in consecutive years.

**Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL)** is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018. NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.



**Education Loan Task Force (ELTF)** was started in 2010 to create awareness about education loans, among students and parents. More than 30,000 queries have been responded to, through email, and more than



5000 serious complaints have been taken up with the top management of the banks concerned, for redressal. Many policy issues have been taken up by Sansad Ratna Awardee MPs, in the Parliament for solution. ELTF does not facilitate loans.

**Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI):** DiJAI is an independent NGO founded in 2017 to create awareness about digital journalism and its implications, among the public and particularly among the journalists. DiJAI conducts several online and offline workshops and seminars, with panels of domain experts.



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## **Publisher's Note**

On behalf of the Editorial Team of PreSense, we present the third edition of 'PreSense Speaks' Series. The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India, for positive journalism. In March 2022, PreSense completed 16 years. We have published 185 editions till July 2022.

As readers are aware, we have published digests of select articles up to 100, 110, 130, 150 and 175 editions. We had the unique privilege of carrying Foreword from Dr Abdul Kalam himself for the 100<sup>th</sup> edition.

The first edition of PreSense Speaks series was released by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Mos, Parliamentary Affairs in May 2021. The first edition was the compilation of articles on communication. This second edition of PreSense Speaks Series contains the Editorials published by us in 2020, 2021 and 2022. This third edition is the compilation of articles on Indian Freedom Fighters published by us in the past. We are proud to release this compilation on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022, when the nation celebrates the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence.

I thank Shri C Badri, the Editorial Advisor who has taken all pains to research and write the articles every month. I also thank Shri Ramesh Sundaram, Editorial Advisor for the editing support.

I am confident that this edition will be useful for all our readers.

K. Srinivasan  
(Prime Point Srinivasan)  
Publisher and Managing Editor,  
PreSense



## **Freedom Fighters of India**

## Babasaheb Dr B R Ambedkar

*By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (April 2015)*

With the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) happening this year, we remember him as yet another legend forgotten in the annals of Indian history. He was the architect of the Indian Constitution, which has stood the test of time, braving various challenges of Indian politics and governance. He was a great philosopher, economist, lawyer, political activist and social reformer.

### **His Early Days - No Peon, No Water**

Bhimrao Ramji Sakpal Ambavadekar (later Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar) was born to a Maratha family, as the 14<sup>th</sup> child to his parents. His community was considered 'untouchable' in the society. As a school student, he underwent much humiliation due to this social practice of caste discrimination. It is distressing to read about his personal experience because of 'untouchability' prevailing then.

Quote

*While in the school, I knew that children of the touchable classes, when they felt thirsty, could go out to the water tap, open it, and quench their thirst. All that was necessary was the permission of the teacher. But my position was separate. I could not touch the tap; and unless it was opened for it by a touchable person, it was not*

**If the peon was not available, I had to go without water. The situation can be summed up in the statement—no peon, no water.**

*possible for me to quench my thirst. In my case the permission of the teacher was not enough. The presence of the school*

*peon was necessary, for he was the only person whom the class teacher could use for such a purpose. If the peon was not available, I had to go without water. The situation can be summed up in the statement—no peon, no water.*

Unquote

Mahadev Ambedkar, his Brahmin teacher was sympathetic towards him and supported him. He changed his original name in the school records from 'Bhimrao Ramji Sakpal Ambavadekar' to 'Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar,' adding his own surname of Ambedkar.



**Sayajirao  
Gaekwad III**

With his father's encouragement, Dr Ambedkar completed his graduation in Bombay. Although he was opposed to 'Manu Smriti,' his writings reveal his deep knowledge of the ancient scriptures, Vedas and the Upanishads. Even in the Constituent Assembly, he favoured Sanskrit as the national language, although it was not accepted by the majority.

### **Support from the Baroda Ruler**

Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the ruler of Baroda was a social reformer who supported poor students from the 'depressed class (untouchables)'. When he met Bhimrao Ambedkar, he recognised his potential and offered him a scholarship to study abroad. Ambedkar completed his studies, including a doctorate at the Columbia University (USA), and at the London School of Economics (UK). In spite of the caste discriminations and untouchability practices, some good-hearted people like Mahadev Ambedkar and Sayajirao Gaekwad III recognised Ambedkar's potential and helped him to move to the higher

levels in academics. Ambedkar proved to be an outstanding student wherever he studied.

On his return to India, he served the Baroda ruler for some time. In 1918, he became the Professor of Political Economy at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay. Even though he was popular with the students, the professors objected to his reformist activities such as sharing the same drinking-water jug that they all used.

### **Round Table Conference**



***Dr Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi in the Round Table Conference***

The British Government invited leaders from different political parties to the Round Table Conferences held in 1930-32, to draft a new Constitution leading to the self-rule by Indians. Dr Ambedkar attended all the three Round Table Conferences. Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the first Conference due to a difference in opinion with Dr Ambedkar. During the First Round Table Conference

held in November 1930, Dr Ambedkar proposed the concept of a 'Separate Electorate' for the 'Depressed Class' (Untouchables). He argued that the problems faced by the untouchables were not social problems but political problems. More than 20% of India's population were from the untouchables category. Dr Ambedkar pleaded that the problems of such a sizeable portion of the population could not be ignored. He wanted a proportionate political power to resolve the issue. He suggested a 'Separate Electorate' for the

Depressed Class, meaning thereby that their representatives could be elected only by the untouchables and not by all the others. He even quoted from the Mahabharata that the kings and the ministers therein were from all communities, (including oppressed class, which is equivalent to the socially deprived people).

Since Mahatma Gandhi held a different view, he did not agree with the suggestion. He opposed it in the Second Round Table Conference. He feared that allowing a 'Separate Electorate' might divide the Hindu community further. He believed in a change in the social mindset of the people to eradicate untouchability.

### **Poona Pact**

British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald made an Award in 1932 known as the 'Communal Award', providing 'Separate Electorate for Muslims, Christians, Upper Caste Hindus, Lower Caste Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Depressed Class'. The Depressed Class (Untouchables) could then elect their own representatives to the various provinces under the British rule. This was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi on the ground that it would disintegrate the Hindus. Gandhi was then in Pune Yerwada prison.

He went on an indefinite fast from 20<sup>th</sup> Sep 1932 against the 'Separate Electorate' for Depressed Class. After some lengthy negotiations, Ambedkar and Gandhi reached an agreement on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1932 to have a single Hindu electorate, with Untouchables having seats reserved within it. This is called the 'Poona Pact.' The text uses the term "Depressed Classes" to denote Untouchables. It was later called the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the India Act 1935, and then the Indian Constitution of 1950.

## **Reserve Bank Conceptualised**

The Reserve Bank of India was founded on 1st April 1935 to address the economic troubles of the nation after the First World War. RBI was conceptualised as per the guidelines, working style and outlook presented by Dr Ambedkar as written in his book, "The Problem of the Rupee – Its origin and its solution."

## **Forming Political Party**

In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party, which contested in the 1937 Bombay elections to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats and securing 11 and 3 seats, respectively. Right from 1916, Dr Ambedkar began uniting all the untouchables in India. In July 1942, he organised a national conference at Nagpur under the banner of Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF). More than 75,000 scheduled caste people, including 25,000 women participated. In his historic speech, he demanded self-respect and freedom. Later, SCF transformed itself into the Republican Party of India (RPI).

## **Joining the Government**

In 1942, he was invited to join Viceroy's Executive Council as Labour Member with three additional portfolios. As Labour Member, he influenced the British to concede 13% representation to Scheduled Caste (SC). The British gave just 8.33%. (Later, while writing the Constitution, he made a provision of 15% for SCs.) He continued in this position till 1946. He was responsible for reducing the working hours of labourers from 12 hours to 8. He also introduced the concept of Provident Fund and Dearness Allowance. He created the employment exchanges. He introduced maternity leave for women. As a believer of free market, he introduced the Gold Standard. He was the brain behind the Hirakud Dam and the

Damodar Valley Project. He was also the brain behind the India's Water Policy and the Electric Power Planning.

### **Constituent Assembly**



***Dr Ambedkar with  
Members of Drafting  
Committee***

Under the Cabinet Mission Plan 1946 of the British Government, a Constituent Assembly was set up in 1946 in the then undivided India to frame the Constitution for India. The members were elected from different provinces. Since Dr Ambedkar could not be elected from Mumbai, he was elected from East Bengal with the help of the Muslim League. These

districts were later identified for inclusion in Pakistan. To prevent Dr Ambedkar from leaving the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad (President of the Constituent Assembly) wrote a letter on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1947 to the then Prime Minister of Maharashtra (as he was called then) to get him elected from Maharashtra Province. Thus, he got elected to the Constituent Assembly again. He was made the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Although there were 7 members in the Committee, he was practically the only one shouldering the entire responsibility and burden of drafting.

The Draft Constitution was presented by Dr Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly and was discussed and adopted by the Members. The Constitution was adopted in its complete form on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1949 and came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950, which is celebrated as the Republic Day of India. While adopting the Constitution, all the members praised the

extraordinary work done by Dr Ambedkar in drafting the Constitution.

Dr Ambedkar served as India's first Law Minister from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 in the Nehru Cabinet. Due to his differences of opinion on the Hindu Code Bill, which deprived equal rights to women, he resigned from the Cabinet in September 1951.

### **Defeated in the Elections**

During the first General Elections in 1951 to Lok Sabha, he contested from Bombay North, but lost to a little known Congress candidate, Narayan Kajrolkar, who was once his assistant.

He became a Member of Rajya Sabha as a nominated member in 1952 and continued as a member till his death.

In 1954, he contested again in a by-election held in Bombay Bandra. Here too, he was placed third and lost to a Congress candidate.



***Dr Ambedkar and his wife during 'Dhamma Diksha' at Nagpur***

Sadly, Dr Ambedkar could not sit in the First Lok Sabha, the Constitution for which was created by him. The Second General Election was held in 1957 after his death in 1956. He could therefore not enter the Lok Sabha at all.

### **Conversion to Buddhism**

He declared his intention to convert to another religion, public as a large section of the society was treated as untouchable by the Hindu section. Although Christians and Muslims

approached him to convert to their religion, he preferred Buddhism. On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1956, Ambedkar, along with his wife, converted to Buddhism in the presence of a monk. Thereafter, he persuaded thousands of people of the Scheduled Caste to convert to Buddhism. He passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 1956 in his sleep.

## His Bold Views



He was a great scholar and philosopher. He was bold in expressing his views. He preferred Sanskrit as the National Official Language. However, it was not approved in the Constituent Assembly.

When Prime Minister Nehru wanted him to draft Article 370, he refused as he felt that it would be against the interest of the nation.

## **Media Report – Dr Ambedkar for Sanskrit as Official Language of India**

While all the modern historians argued in favour of the Aryan theory, he wrote that there was no race by that name. He also said that the theory that Aryans invaded India through

Khyber Pass was false.

He openly criticised Mahatma Gandhi on various issues and even authored a book titled 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables'. In response to this book, Rajaji and K Santhanam authored a book 'Ambedkar refuted,' defending Mahatma Gandhi.

## Forgotten Legend

There could be several people who had differences of opinion with Dr Ambedkar. But no one can deny the fact that Dr Ambedkar formed his views, based on his own experiences and despite the harassment he faced in the society. But for this legendary personality, India would not have got the time-tested and the much-acclaimed Constitution. Due to various reasons, he was not fairly recognised in the past by the Government and by the society. In 1990, he was conferred the Bharat Ratna Award posthumously, under pressure from political parties.



The Indian society little supported the architect of Modern India when he was alive. It is time to stand up and salute him for his exemplary contribution to Modern India because although Dr Ambedkar was an 'exclusive member', belonging to the 'Depressed Class', his lifelong work, activities and contribution were inclusive and to the benefit of the nation as a whole.

In response to an RTI activist, Rusen Kumar (Raipur), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting disclosed recently that a documentary film on Dr Ambedkar made by the

Government of India and Government of Maharashtra 14 years ago, is yet to be telecast through Doordarshan for public viewing.

The Indian society little supported the architect of Modern India when he was alive. It is time to stand up and salute him for his exemplary contribution to Modern India because although Dr Ambedkar was an 'exclusive member,' belonging to the 'Depressed Class,' his lifelong work, activities and contribution were inclusive and to the benefit of the nation as a whole.

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## **Rajaji - Part I (Pre-Independence)**

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (December 2014)***

The Indian freedom movement produced many patriotic leaders from all parts of the nation. However, barring a few leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, the others are not so well-known to the present generation. Chakravarty Rajagopalachari (10th December 1878 – 25th December 1972), popularly known as 'Rajaji' and also as 'CR' is one of those great leaders India has produced. He was supportive behind every movement organised by Mahatma Gandhi.

### **First Person to Recognise M.K. Gandhi's Potential**

After graduating in law, Rajaji began his practice as a criminal lawyer in 1900 at Salem, and even at a young age of 25, he was one of the highest paid lawyers in those days. When M.K.Gandhi (later popular as Mahatma Gandhi) was fighting against the South African Government through *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*, in 1912, Rajaji distributed pamphlets about Gandhiji's activities. He was probably the first person to recognise Gandhiji's potential for fighting against the British through *Satyagraha*. After Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa, Rajaji was the first leader to support Gandhiji's *Satyagraha* movement in India. Although Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had met with Gandhiji before Rajaji had, they were not impressed with Gandhiji's ideas at their first meeting. They accepted him as their leader only after Rajaji did.

### **Fight Against Untouchability and Liquor**

As the Municipal Chairman of Salem (1917-1919), Rajaji fought against untouchability in spite of strong opposition from the upper caste. He also fought against alcoholism. When he

subsequently became the Premier of Madras State (as it was called during those days), he brought about an Act permitting the entry of the Dalit community into temples. He also introduced 'prohibition' (of liquor) in the state. Thirty years later, when there was a proposal to reintroduce sale of liquor in the state, he pleaded with the then Chief Minister against this move. Liquor was prohibited for a generation till then. His plea was rejected and liquor shops were re-opened in the state.



Similar to the Sabarmathi Ashram in Gujarat set up by Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaji set up the 'Gandhi Ashram' in 1924 in a village near Tiruchengode and lived in a small hut for 10 years with his children. Both these Ashrams played a significant role in India's freedom movement.

Similar to the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat set up by Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaji set up the 'Gandhi Ashram' in 1924 in a village near

Tiruchengode and lived in a small hut for 10 years with his children. Both these *Ashrams* played a significant role in India's freedom movement. Rajaji was a great follower of Gandhiji. On several occasions, Mahatma Gandhi described Rajaji as his 'conscience keeper' and also his 'political heir.'

## Shoulder-to-Shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1930, Gandhiji started his *Dandi Salt Satyagraha*. On 13<sup>th</sup> April 1930, Rajaji started his march from Tiruchirapalli to Vedaranyam to collect salt. He was arrested. These two marches galvanised the entire India.



On 6th April 1930, Gandhiji started his Dandi Salt Satyagraha. On 13th April 1930, Rajaji started his march from Tiruchirapalli to Vedaranyam to collect salt. He was arrested.

## **Visionary Ideas Not Understood**

Rajaji was a great visionary. His ideas were always futuristic and he did not worry about the contemporary ideas. Most of the time, his ideas were misunderstood and he was criticised for his revolutionary ideas. It was only on a later date that people realised the worthiness of his ideas. Rajaji had both admirers and critics for his philosophy. Notwithstanding criticisms, he used to express his views freely, keeping in mind the interest of the nation and the people.

In 1942, when the British Government was engaged in World War II, Mahatma Gandhi announced the 'do or die' slogan and the 'Quit India Movement'. Rajaji at that time had advised against venturing into such aggressive movements, as the Government was engaged in war. He also suggested a friendly dialogue with the Muslim League, in preparation for the country's independence after the world war. Mahatma Gandhi and the other leaders rejected his idea and went ahead with Quit India Movement. Rajaji then resigned from the Congress and returned to Madras.

More than one hundred thousand freedom fighters, including senior leaders, were arrested. The *Ahimsa* movement turned out to be a violent event, in the absence of the leaders to guide the people of the movement. The arrested leaders and freedom fighters were released only in 1945 after the war was over. This was a setback for the freedom movement. Meanwhile, the Muslim League was aggressive in their stand for the partition of India since there was no Congress leader to engage them in dialogue. It was only then, that the Congress leaders realised that they should have heeded Rajaji's advice. Rajaji returned to the Congress in 1945 at the request of Mahatma Gandhi, to galvanise the freedom movement.

Though there was opposition against partition, Rajaji introduced a formula, popularly known as the 'CR Formula' before independence. Talks were held between the Congress and the Muslim League, based on the CR Formula. Many Congress leaders later felt that if the Quit India Movement had been abandoned and Rajaji's advice followed, the Partition would have been smoother and without bloodshed. At a critical time when India's independence was in the vicinity, all the senior Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi were in the jail.

“ Though there were oppositions against partition, Rajaji introduced a formula, popularly known as the 'CR Formula' before independence. Talks were held between the Congress and the Muslim League based on the CR Formula. Many Congress leaders later felt that if the Quit India Movement had been abandoned and Rajaji's advice followed, the partition would have been smoother and without bloodshed.



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## **Rajaji – Part II –(Post-Independent Era)**

*By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (December 2014)*

### **Post Independent Era**

After India's independence, when communal clashes broke out in West Bengal, Rajaji was requested to be the first Governor of West Bengal with effect from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. He played a major role in curbing the violence. In 1948, he was made the 'Governor General of India' (now renamed the President of India). Rajaji was the last Governor General of India and the only Indian to hold the position. As he was opposed by a section of Congress leaders for his non-participation in the Quit India Movement, he was not made the President of India after 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1950. Pandit Nehru requested Rajaji to help him by joining the cabinet in 1950. Rajaji resigned in 1951 after a misunderstanding with Nehru.

In 1952, a large number of Communist candidates were elected to the Madras State Assembly (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra and part of Karnataka) and the Congress failed to obtain a majority. This resulted in political instability in the state. Prime Minister Nehru then approached Rajaji to help the Congress by becoming the Chief Minister of Madras State. Rajaji reluctantly took up the position as the Chief Minister of Madras State in 1952.

During his tenure, he brought about strict rules for good governance to function without political interference. He wanted corruption-free governance. He introduced an education policy known as 'The Modified Scheme of Elementary Education,' combining vocational courses with the academics, and with reduced academic hours. He wanted to encourage more children to attend school. At that time, less than 48% of children attended primary schools, and more than 50% dropped out after primary school. His critics opposed his

policy as a 'hereditary education policy' and accused Rajaji of supporting casteism.



President Rajendra Prasad presenting the Bharat Ratna to C. Rajagopalachari on January 27, 1955.

A committee of eminent educationists known as the 'Parulekar Committee' endorsed his education policy and proposed that it be extended to all rural areas. President Rajendra Prasad, Prime Minister Nehru and the Central Advisory Board on Education too appreciated and endorsed the policy scheme. Rajaji defended the scheme saying it was necessary to train the students on various vocational courses, to make the country vibrant and progressive.

His political opponents in the Congress party wanted him to withdraw the scheme. Rajaji preferred to resign from the post, rather than withdraw it. He resigned from his position in 1954. Kamaraj, who succeeded him as Chief Minister withdrew the Scheme. Several years later, India realised the need for more vocational and professional education.

## Leaving Congress

Rajaji was the first recipient of the 'Bharat Ratna' Award, when it was introduced in 1955. Rajaji resigned from the Congress Party due to differences in opinion between him and its members. He founded the 'Swatantra Party' in 1959. In 1967, the Swatantra Party became the second largest party with 44 MPs. Rajaji never contested in the national elections in his political career. When the Congress was leaning towards left, he advocated liberalisation of economy and the removal of the 'License-Quota-Permit Raj.' Although the Congress did not accept his economic policies at that time, they introduced the very same economic policies later in 1991, after 32 years.

In 1967, he formed the first political alliance in India with 7 parties in Tamil Nadu and defeated the Congress, paving the way for DMK to come to power. Thus, even the powerful leader, Kamaraj was defeated in the elections. It is a different story that later in 1971, he formed an alliance with the Congress(O) led by Kamaraj to dethrone DMK but failed.

### **Rajaji as an International Leader**

Rajaji was against nuclear weapons. In 1955, he appealed to the Government of India to refuse American aid if the country continued with its nuclear tests. This embarrassed Pandit Nehru too. Rajaji authored a book called "Mankind Protests,"



**C. Rajagopalachari (second from right) and members of the Gandhi Peace Foundation meeting the then American President John F. Kennedy (centre)**

opposing nuclear weapons. Mr. Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary, USSR, got it translated into Russian for wide circulation in his country.

In 1962, Rajaji visited USA, along with the members of Gandhi Peace Foundation delegation, in response

to President Kennedy's invitation. This was the only foreign visit Rajaji undertook in his lifetime. He was the only civilian not in office, to be given a red carpet reception at the White House. President Kennedy was impressed by his presentation, and he spent more than one hour with him as against the allotted 25 minutes. Rajaji explained to Kennedy the dangers of embarking on an arms race, even one in which USA could win.

### **Multi-Faceted Personality**

Rajaji was a prolific writer and in 1922, he was the editor of 'Young India'. He was a regular contributor of articles on a variety of subjects, to several magazines including 'Kalki' and 'Swarajya' from 1960 till his death. Rajaji authored among others, commentaries on important books like the 'Ramayana,' the 'Mahabharatha,' the 'Thirukkural' and the 'Bhajagovindam.' These have since been translated into several languages.

Rajaji died on 25th December 1972, after a short illness. It is interesting to know that when Rajaji's parents checked his horoscope at the time of his birth, the astrologer told them that the baby's future included the fortunes of a king, of an exile, of a guru, and of an outcast. The people would worship him; they would also reject him. He would sit on an emperor's throne; he would also live in a poor man's hut.

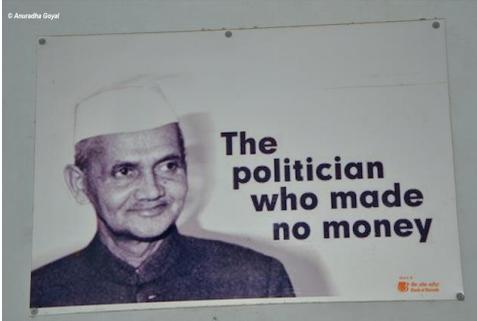
Rajaji was respected for his immaculate honesty, his integrity and his selfless dedication for the welfare of the poor.

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## Lal Bahadur Shastri

*By Sukruti Narayanan, Editorial Team (January 2014)*

### Simplicity and Honesty



These days, when Indian politicians are accused of amassing illegal wealth and having Swiss Bank accounts, can you imagine that the second Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri died a poor man, leaving behind a

debt for the car loan availed by him from a bank? He was one of the freedom fighters of India.

Lal Bahadur Shastri did not own a car even after becoming the Prime Minister and the family members persuaded him to own a car. Being a simple person, he had only Rs.7000/- in his bank account. A Fiat car cost Rs.12,000/- those days. He applied for a bank loan of Rs.5000/-. When he died at Tashkent on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966, his loan account was not cleared fully.

### Mysterious Death of Shastri

After signing an agreement with Pakistan in Tashkent (Soviet Union) on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966, he died in his hotel room on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966 reportedly due to heart attack. Though his family members raised doubt about his mysterious death, till date the cause of his death remains unknown.



***Lal Bahadur Shastri-Sardar Swaran Singh-Y B Chavan – one of the last photos at Tashkent – 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1966***

The Prime Minister's Office, while refusing information under the RTI Act on the cause and the circumstances of Shastri's death, said that disclosing this information could harm India's foreign relations and also violate Parliamentary Privilege. Unfortunately, the simple and efficient Prime Minister is

forgotten in history forever.

### **Shastri in Politics**

Born into a teacher's family on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1904, Shastri joined the freedom movement in early 1920s. He spent more than 9 years in the jail on various occasions. As General Secretary of the Congress Party, he played an important role in the landslide victory of the Congress Party in the Indian General Elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962.

He served as the Minister of Railways in the Central Government from May 1952. In December 1956, he resigned, accepting moral responsibility for a railway accident at Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu that resulted in 144 deaths, even though the Railway Minister was not responsible for such accidents.

### **Shastri as Prime Minister**

Lal Bahadur Shastri took over as the Second Prime Minister of India, after the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1964. At that time the country was facing a huge economic

crisis, besides troubles created by China and Pakistan in the border. He implemented the Green Revolution and the White Revolution in the country to increase grain and milk production. He even appealed to the people to give up one meal, so that the saved food could be given to needy people. He gave importance to the Jawans and the Kisans, by coining a slogan, "Jai Jawan; Jai Kisan."



Shastri's greatest moment came when he led India to victory in the 1965 Indo-Pak War. It was during the signing of the Tashkent agreement between Pakistan and India that Shastri had mysterious death.

The nation remembers Lal Bahadur Shastri with reverence, and salutes him for his contribution to the nation.

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## Pingali Venkaiah

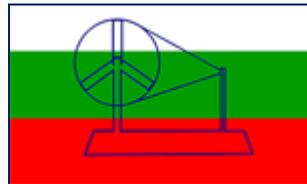
***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (August 2014)***

When we hoist the national tri-colored flag, most of us may not know the person, who designed the flag. Successive governments, post-Indian independence, have also ignored him and he has not been given his rightful place in history. The online survey conducted by your ezine, PreSense during this month, revealed that nearly 80% of the people who took the survey, were not familiar with his name. Interestingly, many associated this name with one of the better-known current political leaders.



Pingali Venkaiah was born on 2nd August 1876 in the erstwhile Madras Province (now Andhra Pradesh). He was an authority on many subjects, with doctorates in agriculture and geology. He was also an expert on diamonds and was popularly known as “Diamond Venkayya.”

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi after meeting him in South Africa, Venkaiah actively involved himself with the freedom movement. It was during that time that he got the idea of designing a national flag for his mother country. He started research on the national flags of different countries. He authored a book, “A National Flag for India” in 1916.



During the All India Congress Committee meeting held in 1921 at Vijayawada, Venkaiah showed his model of the Indian flag

to Mahatma Gandhi. The model had red and green bands. Mahatma Gandhi suggested to him to include a white band on top and a spinning wheel in the center.



The flag underwent further modification with saffron color at the top, a white band in the middle and green at the bottom. Gandhiji's 'spinning wheel' was placed in the center. This flag was named the

'Swaraj Flag.'

This flag was hoisted by the then Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru on 31st December 1929, on the banks of the Ravi River in Lahore, in present day Pakistan. The flag of India was hoisted publicly across India by Congress volunteers, nationalists and the public. The year 1931 was a landmark in the history of the flag. A resolution was passed, adopting the tri-colored flag as the Indian national flag.

In 1931, Mahatma Gandhi, complimented Pingali Venkaiah, in his magazine 'Young India'.

On July 22, 1947, the Constituent Assembly adopted it as Free India's National Flag. The colors and their significance of the flag remained generally the same, ever since the Indian Independence. The only change adopted was the replacement of the spinning wheel with the Dharma Charkha of Emperor Asoka as the emblem on the flag. Thus, the tri-colored flag of the Congress Party eventually became the tri-colored flag of Independent India. Pingali Venkaiah's design became the prototype for the Indian National Flag.



Sadly, the person who designed the national flag was not recognized by the Government. He was not even listed as a 'freedom fighter.' Due to his poverty and ill health, he could not travel to Delhi to witness the hoisting of the tri-colored flag at the Red Fort. He died a poor man, on 4th July 1963. There have been representations from several quarters to confer the 'Bharat Ratna' on him for his contribution to the nation.



In 2009, the Government of India commemorated a postage stamp in his memory. In August 2014, the Central Board of Secondary Education conducted an online essay competition on Pingali Venkaiah, to create awareness about him among school children. The winners

were awarded on 15th August 2014 and they witnessed the flag hoisting by the Prime Minister at the Red Fort.

The country is used to the names of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru as leaders of the freedom movement. However, there are many other great people like Pingali Venkaiah, hailing from different regions of the country, who have contributed in their own silent way, in the freedom struggle.

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## Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharathi

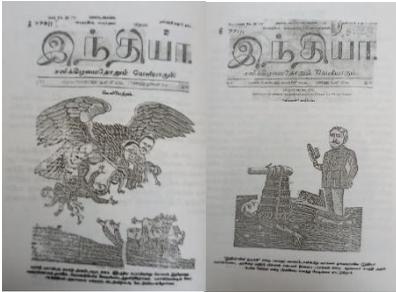
*By Srinivas Gopal, Editorial Team (Sep 2021)*

This September, the 100th death anniversary of Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi (11 December 1882 – 11 September 1921), was observed across India. Mahakavi Bharathi was a celebrated poet, freedom fighter, social reformer and a journalist. He was the pioneer of modern Tamil poetry. He was proficient in 14 languages, including 3 foreign languages. Prime Minister Narendra Modi used to quote him very often in his speeches. Last week, he announced a Chair in the name of Mahakavi Bharathi at the Banaras Hindu University, for Tamil Studies.



Since his fiery songs kindled patriotism during the Indian Independence movement, British Government banned his poems, thus to make him popular. Through his thought-provoking poems, he emphasized the need and empowerment of women and fought against many social evils. His songs are still rejoiced in the Tamil films, in its original format and are still very popular.

Born in Ettayapuram of Tirunelveli district (present day Thoothukudi) in 1882, Bharathi had his early education in Tirunelveli and Varanasi and worked as a journalist with many newspapers, including The Hindu, Bala Bharata, Vijaya, Chakravarthini, the Swadesamitran and India. He was an outstanding cartoonist also.



***Cartoons drawn by Bharatiyar  
against British***

He authored poems, 25 years before independence, celebrating the freedom and praising our spirit to Tricolor. He lived only for 39 years. Within that short period, he made a great mark in the Indian history. Sadly, during his lifetime, he lived in poverty and at the time of his funeral only 10 people participated.

Today, the whole world admires him and official requests have been made to celebrate Mahakavi Bharati in United Nation also.

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## Jai Hind Champakaraman Pillai

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Oct 2021)**

The entire nation, including our leaders irrespective of the political affiliation, use the magic word 'Jai Hind' without knowing who coined this word which united all the people. It was Dr Champakaraman Pillai (1891 – 1934) who coined this word Jai Hind even when he was a student and used it in 1907 to greet his friends.



Dr. Champakaraman Pillai, a brave son of India was at the forefront in the fight for Indian Independence much before Mahatma Gandhiji, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Dadabhoj Nowroji, Lala Lajpat Rai and many other legendary freedom fighters. His thirst for freedom was so great that during his student days in Maharaja's College, Thiruvananthapuram he greeted all his friends with "Jai Hind", a slogan coined by him. He left India for Italy and then to Germany when he was only 17 years old. In the course of his short stint abroad he met many famous leaders including Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vithalbai Patel (brother of Sardar Vallabhai Patel), M.N. Roy, Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler and many other Nazi Party leaders. He was also an inspiration for Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

An Engineer with doctorates in Political Science and Economics, he found an employment in the German Foreign Office. Later he was



***Oil tanks on fire in the harbour following the bombardment of Madras by SMS Emden (1914)***

“Economic Adviser” to Kaiser Wilhelm II. In Germany he established Indian Independence Committee in 1914. When the World War I started Dr. Champakaraman came in the German war ship SMS Emden with its captain Karl von Muller in September 1914 and bombarded the Madras Harbor oil storage tanks and the British Naval Camps. The bombs targeted only British occupied places. Hence, none of the Indians were killed or injured in that attack. His plan of attacking Andamans for releasing the freedom fighter like Veer Savarkar could not fructify due to inclement weather at that time.

During World War 1, he is said to have printed and dropped pamphlets from the airplanes among the Indian Soldiers in France, exhorting them to turn against the British. Inspired from the Fourteen Points of Mr. Woodrow Wilson the then President USA, Dr. Champakaraman produced Eight Points' Proposal for the Indian Independence. His proposal demanded the French and the Portuguese to leave India. He launched "Pro-India," a monthly magazine published in German and English from Zurich, through which he highlighted the glorious past of India. He also started 'League of Oppressed People' with famous American author 'Edwin Emerson' and addressed many public meetings in U.S. and Africa in support of African Americans freedom.

After the World War I, when Hitler came to power, Dr. Champakaraman developed a working relationship with Hitler with a hope of getting military assistance to end the British Rule in India. But when Hitler had stated in 1931 that Indians deserved to be ruled by the British, Dr. Champakaraman protested immediately by demanding an apology. The apology came a day after the deadline he fixed.

He had the privilege of being the Prime Minister of Provisional Government of India set up in Afghanistan in 1915 with Raja Mahendra Pratap of Kabul as President. However, the defeat

of the Germans in the War shattered the hopes of the revolutionaries. He was the forerunner of Rash Behari Bose and Subash Chandra Bose in organizing an Indian Army abroad to strike against the enemies at home. In 1933, Dr. Champakaraman met Subash Chandra Bose and jointly conceived the idea of Azad Hind. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had stayed with his family (including his father Motilal Nehru & his young daughter Indira) on a number of occasions in Dr. Champakaraman residence at Berlin.

He took vow to come back to India only after independence but he died in 1934 in Berlin due to suspected poisoning. Prior to his death he asked Lakshmibai, his Manipuri wife and adopted daughter of Madam Cama, to sprinkle his ashes in 'Nanjil Nadu' (Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu) and the



**Statue of  
Dr Champakaraman Pillai  
at Chennai**

Karamana River in Thiruvananthapuram. Lakshmibai returned to India with his ashes and travelled from Bombay to Trivandrum aboard *INS Delhi* some years after Independence and immersed them in the river Karamana during a Government-sponsored function."

In 2008 his statue, as a memorial to his honour, was unveiled in Chennai by the then Chief Minister Late Mr. M. Karunanidhi. Many patriotic people in India fought for Indian independence. At the same time the sacrifice and the contributions made by many Indians abroad is no less significant. Dr. Champakaraman was one such eminent freedom fighter.

Mrs. Lakshmibai, who was living in a flat in Bombay, died on 6th December 1972. Maharashtra Police broke open the Flat and took possession of all documents. It was also learnt that

17 Boxes containing various documents were sent to 'Archives India' New Delhi. It is presumed that the boxes might contain letters from Kaiser Wilhelm II, US President Woodrow Wilson, UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the apology letter written by Adolf Hitler.

Dr. Champakaraman photograph is also exhibited in "Revolutionaries Gallery" at Teen Murti Bhavan in New Delhi.

(With inputs from Dr. Sethuleshan, Assistant General Manager (Retd), Indian Overseas Bank and grandson of Dr. Champakaraman Pillai.)

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## Rani Abbakka Chowta

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Nov 2021)**

Rani Abbakka was one of the earliest freedom fighters to fight the colonial powers and thus rightfully regarded as the “first woman freedom fighter of India.” She is the only woman in Indian history to repeatedly confront, fight and defeat the Portuguese. Rani Abbakka’s courage and valiant nature can be compared to Jhansi Rani Laxmibai or Rani Chennamma of Kittur. Unfortunately, very little is written about her in our history books and it is high time that our present and forthcoming generations know about this great and incredible woman freedom fighter.



From the seventeenth century the trade in spices, textiles, war horses etc. flourished between the traders of the west coast of India and the Arabian Peninsula. Having an eye on this booming trade several European countries had been vying to discover the sea route to India and amongst others the Portuguese finally could discover a sea route to India

when Vasco Da Gama reached Calicut in the year 1498 after a very long voyage. Later on, after five years the Portuguese built their first fort at Cochin. With superior naval power the control of all the spice routes to India was completely in the hands of the Portuguese within twenty years of Da Gama’s historic voyage. In fact, during the 16th Century the Portuguese remained unchallenged as the Dutch, the French and the British reached India only during the early part of the 17th century. The naval superiority of the Portuguese made

them invariably win against local rulers who rebelled. In the year 1526, the Portuguese captured the Mangalore port. Their next target was Ullal, a thriving port town that lay between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea.

Ullal was the capital of the Chowta king Thirumala Raya III and the Chowtas were Jain kings who had originally migrated from Gujarat in the 12th century to Tulu Nadu (presently Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka, part of Udupi and Kasaragod district in Kerala). Since the Chowtas belonged to matrilineal dynasty, the heir of Thirumala Raya III was Abbakka his young niece. Abbakka from her childhood had been trained in sword fighting, archery, cavalry, military strategy, diplomacy and all other subjects of statesmanship. When Abbakka was crowned the Queen of Ullal, she had a complete insight of the dangers posed by the Portuguese presence on the coast and she was equally determined to resist the same. Before his death, Thirumala Raya III had arranged marriage of Abbakka with Lakshmappa Bangaraja, the then ruler of Mangalore. Even after her marriage, Rani Abbakka as ruler of Ullal, continued to live in Ullal with her three children. However, the marriage broke down when Bangaraja aligned with the Portuguese.

With an eye on Ullal's trade the Portuguese had been trying to extract taxes from Rani Abbakka. Treating this as unfair demands, she did not budge to the Portuguese and her ships continued to trade with the Arabs despite attacks by the Portuguese. Her army consisted of people belonging to all castes and religions.

The Portuguese first attacked Ullal during the year 1556 under the command of Admiral Don Alvaro de Silveira which ended in a truce. Portuguese after a couple of years again attacked with a larger army and were only able to cause some damage

at Ullal. However, Rani Abbakka's battle tactics and strategy pushed them back once again.

During the next battle under the command of General Joao Peixoto the Portuguese army attacked Rani Abbakka at Ullal and managed to capture the royal palace. Rani Abbakka escaped and with the help of two hundred loyal soldiers raided the Portuguese army at midnight, killed General Joao Peixoto along with seventy soldiers who were camping with him. The remaining Portuguese troops ran to their ships and escaped. When the repeated attacks did not fructify the Portuguese



*Life size statue of Rani Abbakka at Ullal*

resorted to treachery by taking the assistance of Rani Abbakka's husband who revealed her art of war and her strategies. The Portuguese issued various proclamations that any sort of dealing with Rani Abbakka would be illegal and her husband Bangaraja was also warned against extending any support to her.

Despite the proclamations Abbakka continued to defy the Portuguese. The Portuguese frustrated by her defiance then sent Anthony D' Noronha, the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa to attack Ullal in the year 1581. Around three thousand Portuguese soldiers supported by a fleet of battleships made a surprise attack on Ullal in the wee hours of the morning. At that time Rani Abbakka was returning from a visit to her family deity and knowing the attack of the Portuguese she immediately mounted her horse and lead her troops in retaliation. In the battle Rani Abbakka was wounded in the crossfire and was captured. The valiant queen breathed her last in captivity

Rani Abbakka defended the freedom of the motherland and remained a major hindrance to the Portuguese during her rule despite their superior military power which speaks volumes about her courage and dedication to the motherland. It is very sad that her story full of valour and commitment to the motherland is forgotten and got camouflaged in Indian history.

Rani Abbakka is well remembered even today in Dakshin Kannada through "Buta Kola" and "Yakshagana." In Dakshin Kannada "Veera Rani Abbakka Utsav" is held every year in commemoration of this great warrior queen. During the year 2015 Government of India had issued a commemorative stamp in her memory. During the year 2012 the Indian Coast Guard Patrol Vessel "ICGS Rani Abbakka" was also commissioned propitiating her memory. Five Patrol vessels are named after her.

Tulu Baduku museum in Bantwal (Karnataka) displays around 3000 artefacts collected by Prof. Thukaram Poojary over a period of 20 years. Asked what motivated him to do so, Prof.



*Patrol vessel used by Indian Coast Guard*

Thukaram Poojary explains: "As a person who has made a career out of teaching history, I cannot allow an important freedom fighter to be forgotten just like that. Let the

generations of future generation of historians derive inspiration from it and dwell deep into Rani Abbakka's life.

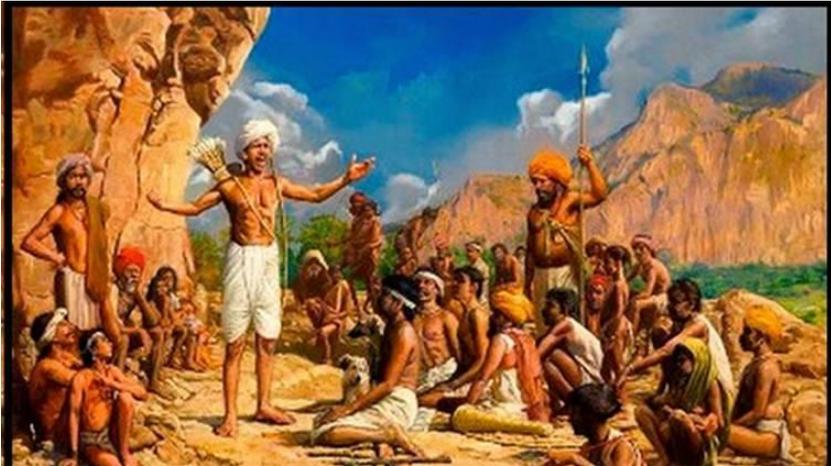
Being an incredible patriot, Rani Abbakka's life made an indelible mark in the annals of Indian history.

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## Birsa Munda

*By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Dec 2021)*

During the British rule many freedom fighters emerged in our country. Only some are remembered in our history books but many other valiant freedom fighters are forgotten despite their struggle for freedom and the bravery exhibited by them. Birsa Munda is one such tribal leader who gathered and rallied the tribal community in Jharkhand against the British. He also



compelled the British to pass laws protecting the land rights of the tribals. Birsa Munda's achievements become more significant because of the fact that he could accomplish them before he was barely twenty-five years old.

Birsa Munda was born on November 15, 1875, in Ulihatu, Ranchi District, Bihar. During his childhood Birsa did not stay at one place but was moving from one village to another village with his parents. He belonged to the Munda tribe in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. Jaipal Nag was his teacher and was his guide too. On the recommendation of Jaipal Nag, Birsa

converted to Christianity in order to join the German Mission School. He, however, opted out of the school after a few years.

Birsa created a religion called "Birsait" which worshipped only one God. The Mundas and the Oraon community joined the Birsait sect and posed a great challenge to British rulers. Given his growing influence in the tribal community, Birsait soon became the popular religion among the Mundas and the Oraons. Birsa was also popularly known as 'Dharti Aba' or "Father of the Earth" and encouraged his followers to get back to their tribal roots and follow their traditions. The powerful preaching of Birsa Munda created a strong anti-British sentiment which was a great pain to the Britishers. He also mobilised thousands of tribals to form guerrilla armies to attack the British.



***Prime Minister Modi  
paying homage to Birsa  
Munda statue at  
Parliament House***

From the years 1886 to 1890, Birsa Munda was most of the time in Chaibasa which was close to the Sardars Agitation. The Sardars Agitation had impressed him a lot and by the time he left Chaibasa in 1890, Birsa was strongly entrenched in the movement against the British oppression of the tribal communities. In the later part of 1890s Birsa Munda fought for the abolition of the feudal system that the British had introduced in respect of the Adivasi forest lands. The British enticed the migrants from other States to work on tribal land and cornered all the income leaving very little income to the people who worked on the tribal lands. In this process the various tribes who were the original owners of the land were left deprived of the land and of their livelihood.

Birsa was arrested on March 3, 1900 while fighting the British with his guerilla army in Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur. On 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1900 he passed away while in custody in Ranchi jail when he was barely 25 years old. The British introduced the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT), which prohibits the transfer of tribal land to non-tribal parties almost a decade after his death.

Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary celebrated on November 15, 2021, at Parliament House, New Delhi. He said "Dharti Aba wrote a complete history for the country in a short span of life and his struggle gave inspiration and direction to the generations of India. Lord Birsa lived for the society, sacrificed his life for his culture and the country. Therefore, he remains in our faith and soul as our God." He further said "Lord Birsa knew that attacking diversity in the name of modernity and tampering with ancient identity and nature was not the way to the welfare of the society. He



was in favour of modern education, he advocated for changes, he showed courage to speak against the evils and shortcomings of his own society. The fight of Dharti Aba was against the thinking which wanted to erase the identity of the tribal society of India".

The birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the iconic tribal leader who led a rebellion against the British, is being celebrated every year as "Janajatiya Gaurav Divas." His portrait is in the Parliament House and he is the only tribal leader to have been so honored.

In recognition of his service to the tribals by fighting for the rights of tribal people and for fighting against the British rule, the State of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in

2000. There are many institutions and public places named after him notably Birsa Agricultural University, Birsa Munda Airport at Ranchi, Birsa Institute of Technology at Sindri, Birsa College at Khunti, Birsa Munda Tribal University, Sidho Kanho Birsa University, Birsa Munda Athletics Stadium and Birsa Munda Central Jail. India Post honored him by releasing a Postal Stamp in the year 1988.

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## Arya Bhashyam

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 2022)***

On 26th January 2022, India celebrated her 73rd Republic Day. During the freedom struggle, many patriots had come out and fought against the British Raj, spending the prime of their youth in prisons. These patriots had also contributed to the independence and freedom we now enjoy. Their families suffered. Many of these patriots' grandchildren lead very simple lives. Sadly, but for a few top national leaders, several thousands of great men and women are not even known to the present generation.



**Shri Arya Bhashyam, who hoisted the Indian Tricolor, after removing the Union Jack in 1932 – a rare photo**

The media, especially the television channels rarely talk about the freedom struggle and the sufferings of these great men and women who struggled for this freedom. During the Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations, the mainstream freedom fighters are lauded, with no mention about the true Unsung Heroes. Our school textbooks to recognize only a couple of the leaders of the Independence period. Many citizens across the country prefer to spend these national holidays entertaining themselves. Many Indians are under the

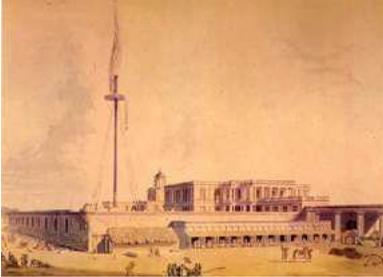
impression that our National Flag has been flying atop only since 15th August 1947. Very few are aware that on 26th January 1932 at 2 a.m., someone had dared to bring down the Union Jack and hoist the Indian Tricolor at the prestigious flag post of Fort St. George at Madras. This was by a 25-year-old vibrant youth named Arya K Bhashyam. In 1919, as a young 12-year-old student, K Bhashyam (Arya was his pen name) was disturbed to hear about the massacre of hundreds of

innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh by General Dyer. He was also inspired by Vanchinathan, who shot and killed Collector Ashe in 1911 and later killed himself at Maniyachi Railway station. Bhashyam purchased four pistols secretly to kill the then Governor of Madras Province and later shoot himself. However, when he stood before the Governor face to face, ready to shoot him, a spark crossed his mind and he resolved not to resort to violence but follow Mahatma Gandhi. Spurred by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's vision of Swaraj, Bhashyam became a firebrand revolutionary and dared to do several feats protesting against the British colonial rule.

He was imprisoned several times and tortured by the police. The Fort St. George, Madras was built in 1644 by the British rulers as their first fortress in India. In 1687, they erected a 148-foot high flag post made of teakwood to stand as the tallest flag post in the country. The Union Jack used to be hoisted on that flag post every day. The British considered these two among the most prestigious imperial symbols erected by them.

26th January was considered the Swarajya Day by the Congress leaders then. Bhashyam wanted to hoist the Indian Tricolor on the Flag Post on Swarajya Day in 1932. Two days in advance, he personally made a large tricolor flag, using his dhoti and wrote in Tamil "இன்றிலிருந்து இந்தியா சுதந்திரம் அடைந்தது" ("From today India has attained independence"). He tied the tricolor dhoti on his waist to skip the notice of the security personnel. In the early hours of 26th January 1932 at 2 a.m., he arrived at the flag post. Arya Bhashyam climbed up the 148-foot flag post, removed the Union Jack from the ropes and hoisted the Indian tricolor. The Union Jack was torn into pieces. No doubt, seeing the Indian tricolor flying atop the tallest flag post infuriated the British and two days later, they arrested Arya Bhashyam and sentenced him to rigorous imprisonment in the Central Jail. He was treated as a

'dangerous prisoner' and kept in quarantine. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was also brought to the Madras prison during that time. Both Arya Bhashyam and Netaji became close associates. In an exclusive interview to the All India Radio during 1970s, Arya Bhashyam described the torture he faced with the police in the jail. He said he was given 30 lashes for questioning their atrocities.



***Fort St George and the Teakwood Flag Staff (100 years ago)***

He shouted 'Vande Mataram' repeatedly, while the Police mercilessly lashed him continuously. Bhashyam was an artist and sculptor. After independence, he returned to a quiet and simple life. He refused the pension given to freedom fighters. He died in 1999 at the age of 93. The Indian tricolor was first hoisted in all the States, including Delhi on 15th August 1947. But Bhashyam accomplished this, as far back as 1932.

Today, only a few records have registered his achievements. With great effort, PreSense traced his only available photograph. The teakwood flag post was replaced in 1994 with a steel replica by the State Government. In every district of the country, there were thousands of such Arya Bhashyams, who are not known to the present generation. Both the Central and the State Governments should identify these unsung freedom fighters and popularize their contributions, for the knowledge of the present generation. PreSense salutes these great heroes.

PreSense appeals to Hon'ble Prime Minister to consider installing his statue inside the Parliament House, befitting his stature.

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## Bhikaji Cama

***By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Jan 2022)***

*"Behold, the flag of independent India is born! It has been made sacred by the blood of young Indians who sacrificed their lives in its honour. In the name of this flag, I appeal to lovers of freedom all over the world to support this struggle." – Bhikaji Cama*



India had many great and valiant freedom fighters who struggled to free India from the clutches of the British, Dutch and Portuguese. Only a very few of the freedom fighters have been celebrated adequately in Indian history but many freedom fighters are unsung and have gone unnoticed. In the Indian freedom struggle not only there were men patriots but there were also very many female patriots who fought valiantly and admirably for Indian independence. And many such female patriots who fought for the Indian freedom struggle hardly found a place in the annals of Indian history and in the Indian textbooks. One such glorious female fighter is Bhikaji Cama. We might have come across her name on places, roads and buildings but only a few knew about her and her contribution during the freedom movement against the British.

This article is about the history of Madam Bhikaji Cama, an impregnable lady who got involved actively and played an important role in the very initial period of the Indian freedom struggle.

Bhikaji was born on September 24, 1861, at Bombay in an affluent Parsi family. Her father Sri Sorabji Framji Patel was a

leading merchant of Bombay. He was not only known for business but he actively engaged himself in the field of education and was a great philanthropist too in the city of Bombay.

It was the time when the Indian national movement started taking its roots which very much attracted Bhikaji even at her young age and drew her towards politics at a very early age. She had a panache for languages and soon became an expert in advocating for the cause of independence in various forums. Bhikaji married Rustomji Cama who was a leading lawyer at that time in 1885. However, the relationship did not last long as Rustomji Cama appreciated the British and fascinated by their culture and firmly believed that the British rule had done a lot of good to India and the Indians and on contradictory Bhikaji was a staunch nationalist and held a strong view that the Britishers had ruthlessly exploited India for their benefit. Thus, their relationship was not smooth and Bhikaji engaged herself actively in philanthropic activities and social work.

In 1896 Bombay Presidency had to face bubonic plague, a deadly infectious disease spread by rats resulting in fever, swelling and ultimately death. In fact, in the fourteenth century bubonic plague killed half of the people living in Europe. People were dying in hundreds in Bombay alone due to the plague but Bhikaji unmindful of the serious and life-threatening consequences volunteered to assist and save the plague victims. In the process she was also affected by the plague and miraculously survived from the dreadful disease. However unfortunately the disease left her in poor health. Consequently, she was advised rest and recuperation and she left Bombay in 1902 to live in London.

An International Socialist Conference was held at Stuttgart (Germany) on August 21,1907. More than one thousand participants belonging to the various countries attended the

conference. It was on this occasion that Bhikaji unfurled the first version of the Indian national tricolor flag with green, saffron, and red stripes during the conference. She then announced,

**“This is the flag of independent India. I appeal to all gentlemen to stand and salute the Flag.”**

The representatives at the conference implicitly obliged her by standing and saluting the first flag conceived of the independent Hindustan. The flag she unfurled was co-designed by Bhikaji and Shyamji Krishna Varma which later served as a model for the current Indian National flag. The flag consisted on the top a green stripe with eight blooming lotuses representing pre-independence India’s eight provinces. “*Bande Mataram*” was inscribed across the central saffron stripe in Hindi. On the bottom red stripe, a half moon was on the right and the rising sun on the left, indicating the Hindu and Muslim faith. The same flag was reportedly smuggled later into India by the Socialist Leader Indulal Yagnik and is now available on display at the Maratha and Kesari Library in Pune.

Madam Cama had wanted to bring poverty, starvation and oppression under the British Raj, as also India’s thirst for freedom to the attention of the international community and she had succeeded. Bhikaji became the first Indian to hoist the Indian flag on a foreign soil. She appealed for human rights, equality and autonomy for the Indians from Great Britain. She also highlighted the sufferings of a famine that had struck the Indian subcontinent.

During her stay in London she met Dadabhoj Naoroji, a strong critic of British rule in India, and started actively working for the independence movement. During the said period she also came into contact with the other staunch nationalists like Lala Hardayal, Shyamji Krishna Varma etc., etc.

The Britishers were punishing those who fought for freedom in the form of ordinances and giving life sentences. The entire world was not aware of the uprising revolt and patriotism of the very many young and old in opposing the British dominance and misrule. The actions of Bhikaji were classified as treason and she was banned from entry to India unless she gave an undertaking not to partake in the freedom struggle. The undertaking was promptly refused by Bhikaji Cama and she remained in exile in Europe.

She continued her activities by relocating to Paris. With the close association of Munchers Shah Burjorji Godrej and Rewa Bhai Rana co-founded the Paris Indian Society. She also authored and published literature encouraging the rebellion which notably included "Bande Mataram," an inspiring poem. In response to the execution of Madan Lal Dhingra she also published "Madan's Talwar." She sent the weekly magazines to the freedom fighter and kept the tempo live. However, the British Government was unable to control her activities despite their best efforts.

Bhikaji also widely travelled in the United States of America bringing to their knowledge the revolution which is taking place in India and the freedom struggle to liberate India from British rule. She was also a champion of women's emancipation and fought for the cause of women who were relegated and highlighted their role in nation building. While addressing the participants at the National Conference held in Cairo in 1910 she stunned the audience by remarking as follows:

*"Where is the other half of Egypt? I see only men who represent half the country! Where are the mothers? Where are the sisters? You must not forget that the hands that rock cradles also build persons."*

## PreSense Speaks | Freedom Fighters of India

Bhikaji remained in exile in Europe until 1935, when she became gravely ill and was paralyzed by a stroke that she had suffered earlier that year. Only at that point of time the British Government allowed her to come back to India. She returned to Bombay in November, 1935 but did not live long. She died on August 13, 1936. She had bequeathed most of her personal assets to the Avabai Petit Orphanage for girls.



The Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department honoured her by issuing a commemorative stamp in her memory during 1962. Indian Coast Guard also commissioned a patrol vessel named the ICGS Bhikaji Cama in 1997.

Bhikaji Cama was a doyen of the early freedom fighters whose courage and commitment exposed the Indian freedom struggle movement to the world. May her name live long in the history of Indian freedom struggle.

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## Veeramangai Rani Velu Nachiyar

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Feb 2022)**

As we celebrate the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - the 75th Independence Day of our great country, it is necessary that we remember the women freedom fighters who exhibited extraordinary courage, valour and commitment for freedom from the British. These women freedom fighters emerged from the length and breadth of the country and did not confine to any one region.



One such brave and committed women freedom fighter from South India is Velu Nachiyar and popularly known as Veeramangai Velu Nachiyar. She has the distinction as the first woman from the royal family who valiantly fought against British rule in India decades before the celebrated Rani of Jhansi, Lakshmibai. Hence it will be fit and fair to celebrate her history during this year - Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Is Velu Nachiyar the first Indian queen to fight against the British? This is a pertinent question raised from time to time. According to the historian V Sriram - Velu Nachiyar would definitely be the first woman ruler to fight the British.

Velu Nachiyar was born on January 3, 1730, at Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu to Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy of the Ramnad kingdom and Rani Sakandhimuthal. She was the only child to them. The royal couple treated her as their son and trained her in various aspects of war. She became an expert in archery, horse riding, Silambam (the art of fighting with a stick) and martial arts

such as Kalari. She was also academically very bright and had good command over many languages notably English, French and Urdu.

Velu Nachiyar's marriage took place with Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar when she was hardly sixteen years old. Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar was the son of Sasivarna Periya Udaiyathevar, the King of Sivagangai. From 1730 Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar was in charge of the administration of Sivagangai. It was the first independent state from Ramnad, which his father ruled as the King. Later during 1750, Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar became the King of Sivagangai. Velu Nachiyar became the queen of Sivaganga. He was the only ruler of Sivangangi to rule the state for the longest period of time i.e., for over two decades till his death in 1772. Vellachi was the only daughter of Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar and Velu Nachiyar.

When Sivagangai was invaded by the East India Company along with the Nawab of Arcot in 1772 Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar was killed in a battle known as the Kalaiyar Koil war. The war was conducted in an atrocious manner that did not even spare women and children as many of them were killed mercilessly by the East India Company. Marudhu brothers and Thandavaraya Pillai who supported Muthuvadugananthur Udaiyathevar managed to escape the war. Velu Nachiyar was in Kollangudi at that time and after the death of her husband she escaped with her daughter to Virupachi near Dindigul. There she took refuge for about eight years under the protection of Palayakaarar Gopala Nayaker.

Velu Nachiyar built a powerful army to fight against the British while in Virupachi. She enticed the support from Gopala Nayaker and Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore. Velu Nachiyar conversed fluently with Hyder Ali in Urdu. This made a great impact on Hyder Ali. Hyder Ali gave his commitment to support

Velu Nachiyar to retrieve her kingdom. She was also allowed to stay at Virupachi or Dindigul Fort by Hyder Ali and she was revered and treated as a Royal Queen. She got the infantry and cavalry support from Hyder Ali to fight against the British. Velu Nachiyar kept on confusing the British by changing her base frequently lest she should be spotted by the British. Hyder Ali also supplied her with the necessary armory so that she could put up a tough fight against the British.

Velu Nachiyar personally faced the British during the year 1780. Thus she became the first Indian queen to face and fight for freedom against the British. She was tipped regarding the British ammunition store and she cleverly plotted and arranged a suicide attack into the ammunition store. Kuyili, her army commander and a loyal follower came forward to carry out the mission. Kuyili then drenched herself with ghee and set herself on fire before jumping into the place where the armory was stored and blew it completely that left the British stranded. Thus, Kuyili brought a spectacular victory for Velu Nachiyar. Kuyili is popularly considered as adopted daughter of Velu Nachiyar. Kuyili is regarded as the first woman suicide bomber. Velu Nachiyar thus regained Sivagangai from the British. Udaiyaal was also an adopted daughter of Velu Nachiyar. She too died in the battle against the British while blowing up their arsenal in another suicide attack. In her memory, the queen built an all-women army and named it after Udaiyaal.



Velu Nachiyar ruled the Sivaganga kingdom for a decade. She made her daughter Vellachi the heir to the throne. Nachiyar's daughter Vellachi succeeded her to the throne in 1790 as the second queen of the Sivaganga estate and ruled till 1793.

Nachiyar expressed her deep gratitude for the support given by Hyder Ali by constructing a Mosque and Church at Saragani. Hyder Ali earlier conveyed his true friendship by building a temple inside his palace. She was suffering from heart ailments in the last few years of her life and also underwent treatment in France. Velu Nachiyar, the valiant queen breathed her last on December 25, 1796, at the age of 66 years in Sivaganga.

In 2014, Tamil Nadu Government honoured Veeramangai Velu Nachiyar with a Memorial in Sivagangai . Tamil Nadu Government has declared that 3<sup>rd</sup> January every to be celebrated as her birthday. A commemorative stamp was also released in her memory by the Government of India on December 31, 2008.

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## Alluri Sitarama Raju

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (April 2022)**



Alluri Sitarama Raju is one of the greatest freedom fighters that India had produced. He laid down his life to break the shackles of his motherland. The inspiring heroics of Rama Raju still inspire the Telugus. Though his battle with the British lasted only for two years, he made an indelible mark in the history of the Indian Freedom Struggle and found a permanent place in the hearts of the countrymen.

Historian Sumit Sarkar had chronicled the heroic rebellion of Rama Raju in his book *Modern India 1885-1947*: "The most striking evidence of continued popular militancy came from the ever-restive semi-tribal Rampa region in north of the Godavari, scene of a veritable guerrilla war between August 1922 and May 1924 led by Sitarama Raju - a truly remarkable man who has become a folk hero in Andhra."

Alluri Sitarama Raju was born on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1897 in Mogallu, West Godavari District of the present day of Andhra Pradesh, to Sri Venkata Rama Raju and Surya Narayanamma. Venkata Rama Raju was a professional photographer settled in Rajahmundry for his livelihood and his mother, Surya Narayanamma was a homemaker. Venkata Rama Raju had a great passion for the freedom and independence of the country. On one occasion he once chided his son Rama Raju, for emulating the then prevalent custom of Indian people saluting the British thereby acknowledging their superiority. Venkata Rama Raju passed away when Sitarama Raju was

hardly eight years old. After his father's death he moved to his mother's hometown of Visakhapatnam. Later he enrolled at Mrs. A.V.N. College for further education. During that period, he frequently visited far flung areas in the Visakhapatnam district and got familiarized with the struggles of the tribal people who lived there.

An interesting incident happened during that time. He developed a special liking towards Sita his friend's sister. Sita's untimely demise shattered him. For her perpetual memory Rama Raju prefixed her name to his name thereby popularly coming to know as Sitarama Raju. He eventually dropped out of college without completing his course. However, he privately mastered the literature of Telugu, Sanskrit, Hindi and English languages. Although he had a chequered education he took interest in astrology, herbalism, palmistry and equestrianism.

Sitarama Raju practiced spiritual disciplines to gain spiritual power. He lived an austere life with minimum needs amongst the tribal people. Very soon his charismatic nature gained him enormous popularity and credibility as a trusted friend and a leader. Understanding the problems of the tribal people and finding solutions to end their sufferings Sitarama Raju highlighted their rights and prepared them for a fight against the tyranny of the Forest and Revenue Officials and police who were under the control of the British. Due to his extensive tours in the forest terrains, he gained expertise in the topography which helped him in Guerrilla Warfare tactics. The British snatched the ancestral properties of the tribals. The Koya tribal brothers Mallam Dora and Ghantam Dora, who were also the contemporary freedom fighters also joined Sitarama Raju and became his trusted aides. The British continued their oppressive and suppressive tactics against the tribals and when it became intolerable the rebellion became the last option for the people and Sitarama Raju became their

natural leader. The British Government then tried to cajole him over by offering 60 acres of fertile land for his Ashram for peace making but Sitarama Raju rejected the offer and stood by the tribal people.

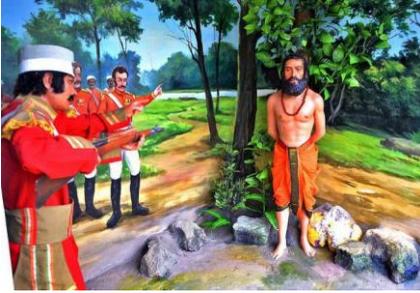
Then came the Rampa rebellion which lasted between 1922 and 1924. Sitarama Raju organized and built strong and powerful groups of fighters amongst the tribals. The tribals were making use of the traditional armory like bow-and-arrow and spears and using tactics like whistles and beating the drums as a means to exchange messages amongst themselves and the revolutionaries.



This process had tremendous success initially against the British but realizing that in long term these tactics will not do good he thought the best way forward is to attack the police stations.

In August 1922, Sitarama Raju robbed the guns and ammunitions from the police stations at Chintapalle, Krishna Devi Peta and Rajavommangi. To achieve the objective Sitarama Raju organized a team about of 500 tribals and trained them. He constantly toured the entire area and recruited more people in his team and killed British police who were on the job of killing Sitarama Raju. After each raid of the police station Sitarama Raju would mention in the station diary the details of the guns and ammunition robbed from the respective police station.

The British struggled to apprehend Sitarama Raju due to the unfamiliar terrain he was operating from and also due to the fact that the local people gave protection to him by concealing



his identity by providing shelter and other assistance. Thus, the British were not able to assess the exact number of rebels. The British realised that his style of guerrilla warfare would have to be countered with a suitable response drafted in

members from the Malabar Special Police who were extensively trained for such warfare. The British tried their best to take the assistance to locate Sitarama Raju but their attempts were not successful. Sitarama Raju later raided the police stations at Annavaram, Addateegala, Narsipatnam and Rampachodavaram. To end the revolution and to apprehend Sitarama Raju the two District collectors viz. Bracken of East Godavari and R.T Rutherford of Visakhapatnam employed all means such as burning villages, destroying their crops, killing the cattle and violating women were of no avail.

After a relentless chase by British forces, Sitarama Raju was caught and tied to a tree. On orders from the British officer, an Indian police inspector shot him dead on 7th May 1924. He was just 26 years of age. Police officer Ganeswara Rao, who trapped Raju got a special award from the police - the title of Rao Bahadur. It was followed by brutal repression and violence that witnessed the killings of many of Sitarama Raju's followers. Several of his supporters were charged with treason and other reasons. The British Government had to spend over Rs 40 lakhs in those days to defeat the rebellion spearheaded by Sitarama Raju to quell the Rampa rebellion. Ultimately the British had to acknowledge Sitarama Raju as a formidable guerrilla warfare hero. He was referred to, by the local villagers, as "*Manyam Veerudu*" meaning Hero of the Jungle.

Mahatma Gandhi paid his tribute to Sitarama Raju saying, "Though I do not approve of his armed rebellion I pay my homage to his bravery and sacrifice. Jawaharlal Nehru commented that, "Raju was one of those few heroes that could be counted on fingers." Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose noted that Alluri was fierce in his determination, and his unparalleled courage and sacrifice for people will ensure him a place in history.

**Tributes:** A Telugu-language movie Alluri Sitarama Raju was produced in 1974. During 1986 the Indian Postal Department issued a commemorative stamp featuring Alluri in the series 'India's struggle for freedom'. The Government of Andhra Pradesh celebrates his birthday on 4<sup>th</sup> July, annually as a state festival. Alluri Sitarama Raju Cricket Stadium in Eluru is named after him. On 9 October 2017, at the request of Members of Parliament the Government of India decided to install a statue of Alluri at the precincts of the Parliament of India in recognition of his work as a freedom fighter and for the welfare of the tribal people.

In 2019, a book named "Alluri Sitarama Raju "was written by Sheikh Abdul Hakim Jaani in Telugu was published which describes the incidents of Alluri's life. RRR produced in 2022 is a Telugu film. It has a fictional story directed by S S Rajamouli based on the lives of the notable freedom fighters Komaram Bheem and Alluri Sitarama Raju.

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## Durgabai Deshmukh

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (May 2022)**

Durgabai Deshmukh (15 July 1909 – 9 May 1981) was one of the great women freedom fighters who along with Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders opposed the British. Apart from being a freedom fighter she was also a lawyer and a committed social worker. She was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and of the Planning Commission of India. She is also popularly known as “Iron Lady”



Durgabai Deshmukh was born in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh on July 15, 1909 to B V N Rama Rao and his wife Krishnaveni Amma and grew up in Kakinada. Durgabai was married at the age of eight to her cousin Subba Rao but she did not continue her married life with him and went on to pursue her education. Though the family had limited financial means her father was a selfless social worker serving the society. In her autobiography “Chintaman and I” she describes an interesting episode.

*“Plague and cholera were prevalent those days. He was not afraid of helping those suffering from these dreaded diseases. He must have attended to hundreds of such victims. He used to take me with him on many of these occasions. Few would volunteer to carry the bodies of those who had died of plague or cholera, and ambulances were unknown. My father, along with three of his friends, used to be the pallbearer. Though the streets of Kakinada were deserted, my father would take my mother and the two children — I had a younger brother, Narayana Rao — to the church, the mosque, or the burning*

*ghat to show us how the bodies were disposed of, perhaps with a view to making us courageous enough to face the inevitable event of death."*

Durgabai had been associated with Indian politics and freedom struggle from her early childhood days. She discontinued her education when she was hardly 12 years old in protest to the imposition of English-medium education. After some time, she established the Balika Hindi Paathshala in Rajahmundry to promote Hindi language for girls. The Indian National Congress during the year 1923 held its conference in Kakinada which was also her hometown. She was selected as a volunteer and was in charge of the Khadi exhibition that was also held by the side of the Conference venue. She was entrusted with the duty of checking the tickets of the visitors to the exhibition at the entrance before they could enter. She discharged her responsibility with due care and stopped even Jawaharlal Nehru entering without showing the ticket. The organizers expressed their displeasure but she retorted that she was only following the instructions. Later on the tickets were purchased and Nehru was allowed to visit the exhibition. Nehru appreciated Durgabai for her sense of devotion to duty and courage.

Durgabai was a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi and associated with him in the Indian struggle for freedom from the British. She was a remarkably simple lady who never wore jewelry or used cosmetics. Durgabai was a prominent social reformer who participated in Gandhi-led Salt satyagraha activities during the civil disobedience movement. She was instrumental in



organising women satyagrahis in the movement. Durgabai was a satyagrahi in true sense. She was the main driving force behind women in Andhra and successfully garnered their support for the freedom movement. Due to her incessant efforts Andhra contributed the largest contingent of women *Satyagrahis* who despite hardships filled the prisons. This led to British Raj authorities imprisoning her three times between 1930 and 1933. Durgabai continued her studies after her release from prison and finished her bachelor's degree and her master's degree in political science from Andhra University. She thereafter obtained law degree from the Madras University in 1942 and started practicing as an advocate in the Madras High Court.

Durgabai during 1953 married the then Finance Minister of India Chintaman Deshmukh in the presence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Chintaman Deshmukh had a daughter from an earlier wedding but they were otherwise childless. Though she did not continue her marital life with Subba Rao, she supported his widow Timmaamma after his death. Timmaamma lived with Durgabai and Chintaman Deshmukh. Durgabai took care of her and also organised vocational training for Timmaamma.

Durgabai was elected to the Constituent Assembly from the then Madras Province. She was the only woman in the panel of Chairmen in the Constituent Assembly. She initiated the proposal of declaring Hindustani (Hindi & Urdu) as the national language of India. However, she was apprehensive about the imposition of Hindi in South India. She suggested a cooling period of fifteen years to enable all the non-Hindi speakers learn Hindi. She was instrumental in the enactment of many social welfare laws. She was also the first to emphasize the need to set up separate Family Courts after studying the same during her visit to China in 1953. With many women's

movement and organizations demanding the same, the Family Courts Act was enacted finally in 1984.

Durgabai was also nominated as a member in the Planning Commission. She was keen to have a national policy on social welfare which resulted in the establishment of Central Social Welfare Board in 1953. During her tenure as the Board's first Chairperson she also mobilized a large number of voluntary organizations to conduct its programs which were aimed at education, training, and rehabilitation of needy women, children, and the handicapped. She was the first Chairperson of the National Council on Women's Education, established by the Government of India in 1958. She was a member of the Indian delegation to the World Food Congress Washington D.C. as a member of the Indian delegation. Durgabai was the President of the Blind Relief Association. In that capacity, she set up a school cum hostel and a light engineering workshop for the blind.

Durgabai established Andhra Mahila Sabha, Council for Social Development, Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital and Sri Venkateshwara College, New Delhi. She also founded Andhra Education Society in 1948 to serve the educational requirements of Telugu children residing in Delhi. She was awarded Padma Bhushan by Government of India. Apart from that she was also honoured with the Paul G Hoffman Award, Nehru Literacy Award, UNESCO Award (for outstanding work in the field of literacy) & Jeevan award and Jagadeesh award to name a few. Andhra University, Visakhapatnam in her honour and recognition to her service to women had named its Department of Women Studies as Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh Centre for Women Studies.

Durgabai died in 9<sup>th</sup> May 1981 at the age of 71 years. She will be remembered as one of the greatest women freedom fighters of India. Long live her name and fame.

## Kittur Rani Chennamma

*By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (June 2022)*

Kittur Chennamma, the Queen of Kittur, was one of the earliest Indian female rulers who led a fierce battle against the British East India Company in 1824. She could not win the war against the British East India Company but she became



an inspiration for the succeeding freedom fighters. She proved to the British East India Company that Indian rulers will not bow to their whims and fancies nor the laws enforced. She is reckoned as a valiant freedom fighter much before Rani Lakshmi Bai, as the revolt of Rani Lakshmi Bai was held during 1857 only. Though she could not succeed completely in her rebellion against the British East India

Company she became a celebrated woman freedom fighter of Karnataka and became a symbol of the independence movement in India.

### Early days

Chennamma was born on October 23, 1778, in Kakati, a remote village in the Belagavi District, Karnataka. Her family belonged to the Lingayat community. She received training in horse riding, sword fighting and archery from an early age. She was well known for her bravery and determination towards a right cause. She was married at the early age of fifteen to Mallasarja Desai, the king of Kittur and became the queen of Kittur. Mallasarja Desai and Chennamma had only one son. Mallasarja Desai died during 1816 and their only son

also died in 1824. Queen Chennamma adopted one Shivalingappa after the death of her only son and made him the successor and heir to the throne of Kittur.

The British East India Company did not appreciate the act of Chennamma in adopting and making Shivalingappa ascend the throne. They ordered Shivalingappa's exile from Kittur. The ordering of exile of Shivalingappa was done by the British under the guise of the Doctrine of Lapse. As per Doctrine of Lapse the adopted children of the Indian rulers were not allowed to become successors by the British Empire. Consequently, the kingdom would become a territory of the British Empire. Lord Dalhousie codified The Doctrine of Lapse somewhere during 1848 to 1856.

Chennamma bravely defied the British order to expel Shivalingappa from the throne. She sent a letter to the Governor of then Bombay standing for the cause of Kittur to maintain status quo. Lord Elphinstone turned down the representation of Chennamma. Kittur came under the control of Dharwad collectorate in charge of Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Chaplin was the Commissioner. Both Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Chaplin men did not recognize Chennamma as the regent and Shivalingappa as the ruler and directed Rani Chennamma to surrender Kittur. Rani Chennamma bravely defied the British order. This triggered the breakout of a war between Rani Chennamma and the British.

### **First Battle**

Annoyed with Rani Chennamma's response and to retaliate the British attempted to pillage Kittur's treasures and jewels which were estimated to be valued around Rs.15 lakhs rupees but were unsuccessful. They had attacked Kittur with a force of around twenty thousand army and four hundred guns, which

came from the third troop of the Madras Native Horse Artillery but were not successful.

In October, 1824 the first battle between the British and Kittur, British forces faced heavy losses. St. John Thackeray, the British Collector and the political agent, was killed during the battle by the Kittur forces. Rani Chennamma's lieutenant, Amatur Balappa, was responsible for Thackeray's death and also for the heavy losses faced by the British forces. Sir Walter Elliot and Mr. Stevenson the two prominent British officers were taken hostages by Rani Chennamma's forces.



To avoid further destruction and war, Rani Chennamma negotiated with Mr. Chaplin, British Commissioner and the Governor of Bombay, as Kittur fell under their authority. Based on the assurances given by the British that the war would no

longer be continued she released the hostages. However, the promise turned out to be only an act of deception. Humiliated by their first defeat at the hands of a small Indian ruler, Mr. Chaplin with vengeance returned with much larger forces from Mysore and Sholapur to attack Kittur once again.

## Second Battle

The second battle was fought fiercely against the British by Rani Chennamma with the support of her trusted lieutenants Sangoli Rayanna and Gurusiddappa. During this battle Mr.

Munro, nephew of Sir Thomas Munro, the Sub-collector of Sholapur was killed. The battle continued for 12 days during which Chennamma and her soldiers defended but Chennamma was made prey to deceit. Mallappa Shetty and Venkat Rao, the two soldiers of her own army betrayed Chennamma. They mixed the mud and cow dung with the gunpowder used for the canons. Kittur Chennamma and her forces were outnumbered by the British forces. Rani Chennamma was defeated in her last battle and captured by the British, who imprisoned her at the Bailhongal Fort for life. Chennamma spent her last five years of her life in prison at Bailhongal Fort reading the holy texts and performing *pooja*. She breathed her last at the Bailhongal Fort on February 21, 1829.

Her loyal lieutenant Sangoli Rayanna, one of her trusted and loyal lieutenants continued the guerrilla war even in her absence up to 1829 but in vain. He desired to install Shivalingappa, Chennamma's adopted son, as the ruler of Kittur. But he was captured and hanged by the British. Shivalingappa was also arrested by the British forces.

Rani Chennamma's samadhi (burial place) is in Bailhongal taluk under the administration of Government of Karnataka. During the freedom movement, her brave resistance against the British forces became the theme of several inspirational plays, folk songs (Lavani) and stories.



Rani Chennamma's first victory against the British is remembered and celebrated every year in October during the 'Kittur Utsava' held in Kittur.

A Kannada movie called Kitturu Chennamma was produced and directed by B. R. Panthulu in 1961 about the life and times

of Kittur Rani Chennamma. Indian Railways named the train that connects Bangalore and Kolhapur as Rani Chennamma Express. On September 11, 2007, President of India, Smt. Pratibha Patil unveiled the statue of Rani Chennamma in the Indian Parliament complex in New Delhi. The Kittur Rani Chennamma Memorial Committee donated the statue. Two other statues of Rani Chennamma were also installed one at Bangalore and the other at Kittur in her memory. A commemorative stamp was also issued by India Post during 1977.

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## Begum Hazrat Mahal

*By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (July 2022)*



Begum Hazrat Mahal known as the Begum of Awadh is the second wife of Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Awadh. She was the regent of Awadh during 1857–1858 and is known for a stellar role she played in the rebellion against the British East India Company during the Indian Revolt of 1857.

The Revolt of 1857 or popularly known as Indian Mutiny of 1857 is an indelible landmark in the evolution of India's struggle for independence. It generated revolutionary ideas and action among later generations and triggered their determination to continue the struggle incessantly against the British and countering the unsurmountable odds till the freedom was achieved. The spirit of nationalism, patriotism, sacrifice, communal harmony and unity of purpose largely prevailed during that dreadful period of trial. While there were many great revolutionaries emerged at that time one such outstanding revolutionary was Begum Hazrat Mahal.

Hazrat Mahal's antecedents are not clear. Hazrat Mahal's name was Muhammedi Khanum. She came from a poor family in Faizabad city situated in Awadh. Locals maintain that she was a dancing-girl and was very much attracted by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Wajid Ali Shah invited her to his court in Lucknow and included her into his harem. When she gave birth to a male child Wajid Ali Shah raised her to the rank of one of his wives and the title Hazrat Mahal was given to her.

East India Company during 1856 annexed the kingdom of Awadh in terms of the Doctrine of Lapse. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah exiled to Calcutta with few of his wives. Begum Hazrat Mahal did not accompany Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and continued to live in Lucknow with her young son Birjis Qadr.

When the Indian Mutiny of 1857 broke out the people of Awadh were dissatisfied about the deposition of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and also regarding the British the annexation Awadh and the religious insensitivity exhibited by them. It was at that time the people of Awadh felt the need of a good leader to revolt against the British. Begum Hazrat Mahal emerged as a leader to assist the rebels defend Awadh against the British. She personally coordinated with all the branches of army namely the cavalry, artillery, and infantry. She also more often rode on an elephant at the head of the army to enthuse and inspire the soldiers against the British troops who were advancing. Like the other places, the rebels in Awadh could not sustain for long against the huge contingents of the British troops. At that point of time viz somewhere in March 1858 Begum Hazrat Mahal's advisors requested her to leave Lucknow considering her safety. She then heeding to their suggestion left Lucknow to the countryside but continued her tirade against the British and issuing orders while in hiding.



*Begum Hazrat Mahal Tomb at Kathmandu*

The main grouse of Begum Hazrat Mahal was that East India Company demolished the Temples and Mosques just to make the roads. During the final days of revolt she mocked the British when they clarified that they allowed freedom of worship. Hazrat Mahal collaborated with Nana Saheb and also

joined the Maulavi of Faizabad while attacking Shahjahanpur. When the city of Lucknow was recaptured by the British she was forced to retreat.

Queen Victoria issued a proclamation on November 1, 1858 to end the Mutiny to pacify the religious sentiments of the Indians and transfer the control of territories in India from the East India Company to the British Crown. To counter the same Begum Hazrat Mahal issued a counter-proclamation in which she highlighted against claims of Queen Victoria.

The Begum Hazrat Mahal reminded the Indians that several previous treaties had been violated as princely heads had either been given pension or killed and property worth crores of rupees were confiscated by the British. If the British intent was honorable, why did the British Queen not "restore our country to us when our people wish it?" asked the fearless bold and patriotic Begum. Begum Hazrat Mahal aptly questioned Queen Victoria's claim to religious non-interference:

***"...to destroy Hindoo and Mussulman temples on pretense of making roads to build churches—to send clergymen into streets and alleys to preach the Christian religion—to institute English schools, and to pay a monthly stipend for learning the English sciences, while the places of worship of Hindus and Mussulmans are to this day entirely neglected; with all this how can the people believe that religion will not be interfered with?"***

Begum Hazrat Mahal forewarned the Indians that their future prospects appeared to be bleak under the British Raj. "It is worthy of a little reflection, that they have promised no better employment for Hindustanis than making roads and digging canals." The Begum's words were prophetic. In the later years after 1857 the Indians pushed files under British bureaucracy

and worked as laborers for the British Government in India and overseas.

After Lucknow was captured she along with a large followers stationed in the fort of Baundi, in Bahraich district. She strengthened the with heavy guns and soldiers. The British were concentrating in re-establishing their authority in Lucknow while the Begam was simultaneously inspiring people in the various parts of Awadh to rebel against the British. In 1858 there were sporadic outbursts in various parts of Awadh, and consequently the British experienced toughest encounters of the rebellion. The support mainly came from the Taluqdars and Zamindars of Awadh and records show their attachment to the Begum.

Begum though vanquished continued to be committed to her cause of freedom. She was determined not to fall into the hands of the British. She left the fort of Baundi in December 1858 and for some time wandered in the dense jungle of the sub-Himalayan terrain with a few of her faithful followers escaping from the British. She finally crossed over to Nepal where she was given asylum by the King despite the protests of the British. The British then offered her a safe return and payment of pension. Begum Hazrat Mahal did not trust the British and outrightly rejected their offer. The Begam died in 1874 at Kathmandu where she lived with her son as a common citizen.

William Howard Russell in his book "My Indian Mutiny Diary" writes: " This Begum exhibits great energy and ability. She has excited all Awadh to accept the interests of her son, and the chiefs have sworn to be faithful to him. The Begum declares undying war against us."

Begum Hazrat Mahal's tomb is established in Kathmandu near Jama Masjid, Ghantagar which is near the famous Darbar

Marg. Jama Masjid Central Committee manages the tomb. On 15 August 1962, Begum Hazrat Mahal was honored with renaming the Old Victoria Park in Lucknow as Begum Hazrat Mahal Park as for her role in the Great Indian Revolt of 1857. A marble memorial was also constructed consisting of a marble tablet with four round brass plaques bearing the Coat of Arms of the Awadh royal family. Government of India issued a commemorative stamp during 1984 in honour of Begum Hazrat Mahal in the Indian Revolt of 1857.



Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship for meritorious girls belonging to minority communities in India was initiated by Government of India. This scholarship is administered through the Maulana Azad Education Foundation. It was launched by the then Prime Minister of India (late) Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the National Conference of Educational & Economic Development of Minorities held on May 3, 2003, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

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## **Veerapandiya Kattabomman**

***By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (August 2022)***



India has the incredible record of producing great freedom fighters and revolutionaries ever since the foreign invaders set their foot in India. One such freedom fighter is Veerapandya Kattabomman. Veerapandya Kattabomman is a freedom fighter from the south of India who lived in 1760 AD. He was one of the earliest freedom fighters who fought against the British and became a source of inspiration to the other freedom fighters. He fought valiantly against the British and became a national hero. Veerapandiya Kattabomman's patriotism, courage, and sacrifice is of a remarkably high order.

Kattabomman's ancestors had migrated from Andhra Pradesh during Vijayanagar empire to settle in a village called "Salikulam" in order to safeguard the Hindus and the Hindu culture from the Muslim kings. They belonged to the "Thogalavar" community and were warriors who would fight until their last breath. The first of the Kattabomman's clan settled at Salikulam was appointed as a Chief Guard to the then King Sri Jagaveerapandian of Veerapandiyapuram (presently known as "Ottapidaram") in recognition of his bravery and fighting capability. By his sheer loyalty and commitment, he gained the confidence of Sri Jaga Veera Pandian the King and became the trusted lieutenant.

Veerapandiya Kattabomman belonged to the 47th generation of the Kattabomman dynasty. He was born to

Jagaveerapandya Kattabomman and Arumugathammal. He had brothers named Oomathurai and Thuraisingam, two sisters named Easuvaravadivy and Thuraikannu. Veerapandiya Kattabomman was crowned in his thirtieth year on 2nd February 1790 and effectively ruled the area which consisted of ninety-six villages divided into six divisions. He ruled the state with great ability of good administration, justice and welfare. He maintained good relations with his neighboring rulers. Two able Generals assisted him namely "Vellaiathevan and Sundaralingam.

It so happened that one day whilst Veerapandiya Kattabomman was on a hunting mission, he happened to witness a strange incident where a hare chased a dog at a particular spot. He considered that land as a land of valor and constructed a fort on that soil. The fort was named as "Panchalamkurichi" in memory of the King Panchapandiyan who was the grandfather of King Jagaveerapandian. The



The Panchalamkurichi fort was a robust fort. It was five hundred feet in length and three hundred feet in breadth with the wall of twelve feet height. The construction material consisted of black clay mixed with a straw of paddy, maize and corn, etc. The fort was completely surrounded by thorny bale bushes. The fort could withstand any type of attack other than the attack by cannons and tanks.

Veerapandya Kattabomman was a great devotee of Lord Murugan of Tiruchendur and Goddess Jakkamma. He had constructed forty-five bell towers between Panchalamkurichi and Tiruchendur which were about forty miles to convey the pooja time of Tiruchendur temple in a relay system. Kattabomman was also a great lover of music and art. He quite often organized dances and music for entertainment.

The British East India Company initially landed in India for commercial purposes and later constructed a fort in Madras beach. Slowly they changed their purpose of coming to India and wanted to rule the county. They adopted the policy of divide and rule. In the process they brought many Indian kingdoms under their rule. They lured them to great business and made them debtors. Nawab of Arcot was dominating the southern states at the same time. In the year 1781 he had no way to settle his debts to the British East India Company. The Nawab of Arcot also became helpless as he could not manage to pay the salary for his forces at Tirunelveli. Thus, the Nawab of Arcot yielded and gave the right to collect the taxes to the British.

The British slowly started to bring the kingdoms of the south under command in 1795. Later they announced that the Nawab of Arcot had no authority over the rulers and brought them under their control. Severe restrictions were placed on the construction of Forts etc., by the Indian rulers.

Kattabomman was determined to take on the British at any cost and defend the country. He enticed the support of all his neighboring rulers viz. Sivagiri, Nagalapuram, Elayiram Pannai, Kolarpatti, Kadalgudi, Kulathor, Maruthu Brothers and from Ramnad King's family. The British conspired and created a rift between the rulers. They created enmity between Kattabomman and the Zamin of Ettappa Naicker of Ettayapuram who turned a traitor to give information about Kattabomman's activities by spying on him. The King of Ramanathapuram was arrested by the British in 1797 and Kattabomman gathered his forces under the command of his brother Oomathurai and took a position at Sivagiri to plan and conduct an attack against the British. The British tried to get Kattabomman and his men in their trap by conspiracy.

Mr. Jackson took over the charge as Collector of Tirunelveli. One by one the local rulers slowly became friendly with him

except Kattabomman. He wrote two letters to Kattabomman in February 1798 and in April 1798 and warned Kattabomman's of dire consequences if he did not and pay the taxes but it had no impact. Jackson requested the British to send the troops to arrest Kattabomman but the British suggested to Jackson to call Kattabomman for settlement through mutual discussions.

Jackson asked Kattabomman to meet him at Ramanathapuram and Kattabomman accepted the invitation. But Kattabomman went with his forces to Ramanathapuram. This irked Jackson as he was expecting Kattabomman to come alone. If the discussions failed, he conspired to arrest Kattabomman. Kattabomman sensing the trick Jackson left his guards and aides outside Ramanathapuram fort and proceeded to meet Jackson. Kattabomman was not given due respect by Jackson and the discussion was not cordial. Sharp words were exchanged between Kattabomman and Jackson which led to clashes between Kattabomman and the forces of Jackson who were kept hidden during the talk. During the clashes and Thanapathi Pillai minister of Kattabomman was captured by Jackson's aides and Clarke a British officer was killed during the fight.

Kattabomman on returning to Panchalamkurichi wrote a letter to the British regarding the Ramanathapuram incident and asked them to release his minister Thanapathi Pillai. An inquiry was held by the British administration against Jackson. Jackson was dismissed from service and Kattabomman's minister Thanapathi Pillai were released. The British army led by Major Bannerman invaded Panchalamkurichi on 5th September 1799 by surprise. The people of Panchalamkurichi were at Tiruchendur celebrating a festival. Kattabomman got to know the plans for the surprise attack well in advance from his well-managed informers. His forces were kept ready to take on the British. To a message of Bannerman to surrender unconditionally Kattabomman said, "We are the sons of this

soil. We live with prestige, honour, and dignity. We do not bow down to the British. We will fight until death."

Kattabomman's army gave a tough resistance and the British had to withdraw their forces. Major Bannerman used cannons to break the clay fort and they were successful in breaking the walls of the fort. On the last day of the war, Kattabomman was injured and he was taken away by his aides from Panchalamkurichi. Kattabomman and his men after the dramatic escape took umbrage in the Thirukalampur forest which was under the King of Pudukkottai. Not to get into controversy with the British, Kattabomman was handed over to the British by the King of Pudukkottai on 24 September 1799.



**Picture courtesy:  
Bharathgyan**

Kattabomman was lodged in Kayathar jail and a trial was held on 16 October 1799. The British invited all the local Zamindars to witness the trial proceedings. He boldly argued for the right of the country and questioned the British invasion. Kattabomman was suggested to request for pardon but did not yield. He boldly proclaimed, "Do what you want to do, you cowards". Kattabomman was awarded the punishment "Hang until death" and his end came on 16th October 1799, when he was hung on a tamarind tree at Kayathar. Veerapandiya Kattabomman will be remembered as one of the greatest freedom fighters of the world and more importantly his Patriotism, Courage, and Sacrifice will be remembered by the future generations in India.

## Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu

*By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (August 2022)*



Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu were freedom fighters who led the Santhal Rebellion during 1855 to 1856. Though the time was short they exhibited extraordinary bravery and determination in fighting against the British despite many odds and though belonging to tribal community. The Santhal rebellion was indeed a native rebellion against the British and also the Zamindars who were corrupt and fleecing the tribals living in the present day of Jharkhand. Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu were brothers and hailed from the village Bhognadih in Sahibganj district. The Santhals fought with traditional bows and arrows against the British who used weapons and arsenal which exhibits how important and dear freedom was for them.

The British in 1832 demarcated Damin-i-koh region of Jharkhand and Santhals lived there. They were promised land and other assistance and hence many Santhals migrated and settled from Cuttack, Hazaribagh and Midnapore etc. The Santhals were solely depending on the forests for their living. They engaged themselves mainly by clearing the wild forest and hunting for their living. The British designated the Zamindars and money lenders for collecting tax from the Santhals. The Zamindars and Money Lenders lent money at very exorbitant rates and the Santhals were caught in their trap as they could not repay the money. Consequently, their

lands were confiscated and were left with no source of lively hood. They were living as bonded labourers. This was the triggering point of Santhal Rebellion. The Santhal rebellion is also referred to as Santhal Hool.

Somewhere around the end of June 1855 Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu gathered about fifty thousand people of Santhal tribe and rebelled against the British. The Landlords and the money lenders who fleeced the Santhals became their targets and were killed. This action of the Santhals took the British by surprise and consequently sent a small force to quell them but without success. When the situation became uncontrollable for the British to manage, they sent a large contingent of army. The British also took the support of local Zamindars and the Nawab of Murshidabad. The British announced a reward of Rs.10,000 for anyone who could give a clue about Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu.

The outdated weapons of Santhals were no match for the weapons and armory used by the British. A number of battles took place from July 1855 to January 1856, and the Santhals suffered casualties. The 7th Native Infantry Regiment, 40th Native Infantry and others put into action. A number of battles took place from July 1855 to January 1856, in places like Kahalgaon, Suri, Raghunathpur, and Munkatora and the Santhals suffered major casualties from which they could not recover. The uprising was effectively crushed and, in the process, the two leaders Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu were also killed. The Nawab of Murshidabad provided a number of Elephants to the British which demolished the Santhal huts and thus quelled the revolution completely.

Major Jervis paid his tribute by recording as follows in his memoir:

***"It was not war; they did not understand yielding. As long as their national drumbeat, the whole party would***

***stand, and allow themselves to be shot down. Their arrows often killed our men, and so we had to fire on them as long as they stood. When their drum ceased, they would move off a quarter of a mile; then their drums beat again, and they calmly stood till we came up and poured a few volleys into them. There was not a sepoy in the war who did not feel ashamed of himself."***

Charles Dickens in his weekly magazine *Household Words* made a mention on the Santals as follows:

***"There seems also to be a sentiment of honour among them; for it is said that they use poisoned arrows in hunting, but never against their foes."***

The Santhal rebellion was overshadowed by the Indian Revolution of 1857 but the history of the Santhals will be



fondly remembered for their commitment, valour, pride and identity in fighting the British. Honoring them after a century and half a separate state Jharkhand was carved by the Government of India. India Post also during 2002 issued a Postal stamp in commemoration of their rebellion. Sidhu Kanhu

Memorial Park was established in Ranchi. Sido Kanhu University was established in memory of Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu which was renamed on 10th January 1992 as Sido Kanhu Murmu University by an act of Bihar Legislative Assembly. Boro Baski a Santal researcher, educator and community leader says, ***"From British Raj to independent India, the Santal Hul drum still echoes***

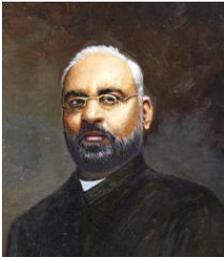
## Shyamji Krishna Varma

**By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (August 2022)**

Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian politician, propagandist, journalist, activist, and revolutionary, who worked for the unification of Italy said:

**“Great revolutions are the work rather of principles than of bayonets, and are achieved first in the moral, and afterwards in the material sphere.”**

Shri Shyamji Krishna Varma (1850-1930) was one such revolutionary, great freedom fighter and an embodiment of patriotism. His commitment to the freedom movement is of an extremely high order. He was a source of inspiration to the



upcoming revolutionaries and he triggered the flame of patriotism amongst the revolutionaries. Some of those who were deeply influenced by him were Shri Veer Savarkar, Shri Madanlal Dhingra and Shri Lala Hardayal. Some freedom fighters fought for freedom staying within the country and many fought for the Indian freedom movement staying in the foreign land. Shri Shyamji Krishna Varma was one such outstanding freedom fighter who fought from a foreign soil. Shyamji Krishna Varma was the first to advocate the principle of nonviolence for getting the freedom from the British. In the later years Mahatma Gandhiji also followed the principle of nonviolence and used satyagraha as a tool to get freedom from the British.

In fact Shyamji Krishna Varma in 1905 wrote: ***'It is not necessary for Indians to resort to arms for compelling England to relinquish its hold on India... If the brown man struck work for a week, the Empire would collapse like a house of cards... If anyone refused to buy or sell***

***any commodity, or to have any transaction with any class of people, he commits no crime known to the law. It is, therefore, plain that Indians can obtain emancipation by simply refusing to help their foreign master without incurring the evils of a violent revolution.'***

Shyamji Krishna Varma was born to Shri Krushnadas Bhanushali and Smt.Gomathi on 4th October 1857 in Kutch, Gujarat. His mother Gomathi died when Shyamji was eleven years old and he was brought up by his grandmother. Shyamji Krishna Varma after completing secondary education in Bhuj he went to Mumbai for higher education at Wilson High School. It was during his higher education he also learnt and became proficient in sanskrit. He later married to Bhanumati, the daughter of Seth Chhabildas Lalubhai a rich merchant of Bombay in 1875.

Shyamji Krishna Varma played a very crucial part during the crucial period of India's struggle for freedom operating from Europe from 1899 to 1930 similar to Mahatma Gandhi struggle for the cause of rights of Indians in South Africa from 1893 to 1914. He was responsible for establishing the renowned "India House" in London during 1904 which later became the pivotal point for India's revolutionaries like Veer Savarkar, Madame Cama, Sardar Singh Rana, V V S Iyer, Lala Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Madanlal Dhingra. Madanlal Dhingra murdered Sir Curzon Vyllie on 1 July 1909 and was hanged on 17 August 1909 and thus became the first Indian martyr on the British soil. Shyamji Krishna Varma was the political guru of Veer Savarkar, V V S Iyer and many other freedom fighters in this period.

Swami Dayanand Saraswathi 's (Founder of Arya Samaj) teachings influenced Shyamji Krishna Varma. He became the first President of Bombay Arya Samaj. Thereafter he was appointed Assistant Professor of Sanskrit in Balliol College in

Oxford and became the first Indian to become Bar-at Law Subsequently, He entered Temple's Inn and was the first Indian Bar-at law. He came back to India in January ,1888 and became Diwan of Ratlam for short period. He practiced as a lawyer at Ajmer and became popular. He was also a member of the Ajmer Municipality and was also the Diwan of Ajmer and subsequently also as Diwan of Junagarh.

Shyamji Krishna Varma returned to England during 1899 and became a popular leader of revolutionary fighting for the freedom of India from the British. A monthly magazine “*Indian Sociologist*” became very popular and further inspired the revolutionaries. Shyamji Krishna Varma along with Bhikaji Cama, S.R. Rana and



Lala Lajpat Rai founded Indian Home Rule Society in 1905 with an intention to cause the idea of getting freedom for India. It found immense support from Indian students and other Indians in Britain. He also established 'India House' in London to help the Indians who visited England. Great Freedom fighters like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his brother Ganesh, Lala Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and V V S Iyer were some of the great revolutionaries stayed in 'India House'. Shyamji Krishna Varma continued his tirade against the British by publishing pamphlets, authoring books and giving patriotic speeches inspiring the youth and other fellow Indians living in England. he announced a few scholarships to outstanding students but on one condition that they would not accept any service under the government, which was exploiting and suppressing Indians. Shyamji Krishna Varma proved through his journal that 'revolutions also start in the minds of men' and came out with his one-penny pamphlet. Due to his anti-British stance and his involvement in garnering revolutionaries he had to leave England and go to Paris. He continued from Paris his activities supporting India's freedom

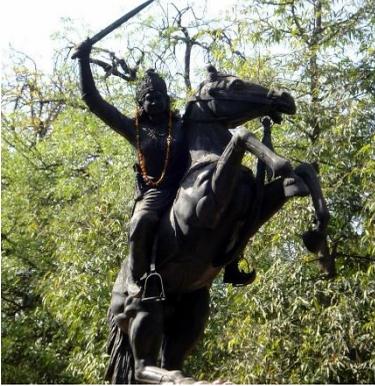
and liberation from the British. He could not stay in Paris due to the outbreak of the first World War and had to go to Geneva in Switzerland. He breathed his last in Geneva on 31 March 1930. The British suppressed the news of his death .But it is worth noting that tributes were paid to him by Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries in Lahore Jail where they were undergoing trial. Tributes *were paid in "Maratha,"* an English daily newspaper founded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Shyamji Krishna Varma made arrangements with the Geneva local government and St Georges cemetery to preserve his and his wife Bhanumati's ashes for 100 years and to send their urns to India whenever India becomes independent. On 22 August 2003, the urns of ashes of Shyamji and his wife Bhanumati were handed over to Narendra Modi then Chief Minister of Gujarat State by the Ville de Genève and the Swiss government 55 years after India obtained freedom. A memorial was built in 2010 and named Kranti Teerth dedicated to him was built and inaugurated in 2010 near Mandvi. The memorial which was spread over 52 acres houses a replica of India House building at Highgate. Shyamji Krishna Varma and his wife's statues were also built in the complex and the urns containing Krishna Varma's ashes and of his wife, and a gallery dedicated to earlier activists of Indian independence movement is housed within the memorial. A new town in his memory and honor was developed in his native place which was named after him as Shyamji Krishna Varma Nagar. Kachchh University was renamed as Shyamji Krishna Varma Kachchh University. India Post had issued a postal stamp on 4 October 1989 commemorating Shyamji Krishna Varma.

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## **Veerangana Jhalkari Bai**

***By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (August 2022)***



***Jhalkari Bai statue at  
Gwalior***

India is an incredible country. The country had produced great Rishis, Saints, Religious Gurus, Emperors and Kings and produced a great culture since the evolution of mankind. The country also produced incredible number of freedom fighters from all sections of the society including from the dalit community. Jhalkari Bai is one such brave and valiant freedom fighters who not only made the dalit community proud but also the comity of freedom fighters.

A remarkable freedom fighter during the Rebellion of 1857 she was one woman driven by sheer fortitude and courage and was able to strike terror to the British army and leave behind a rich legacy for the future freedom fighters to emulate. The remarkably interesting factor is that Jhalkari Bai had close resemblance to the legendary woman freedom fighter Rani Lakshmi Bai.

Jhalkari Bai was born on November 22, 1830, to Sadoba Singh and Jamuna Devi in a village called Bhojla near Jhansi. She was the only child of the couple. When Jhalkari was young her mother passed away and so she was raised by her father as a single parent. The family belonged to Kori caste. Kori was a dalit community which was oppressed. Though the family was poor and as such she could not continue her schooling and peruse her formal education, she had an opportunity to gain

experience of wielding weapons and horse riding at an early age.

Jhalkari grew up as a very brave girl right from her younger days. Stories of her bravery is remembered in the various neighborhoods in Jhansi even today. When she was young some dacoits tried to raid the house of a businessperson living in the village Jhalkari foiled their attempts single-handedly drove them away and saved the businessman. Also when a tiger attacked her when she was passing through a jungle she killed the tiger with an axe singlehandedly. She displayed extraordinary bravery from her early age itself without any fear or apprehensions.

Jhalkari's betrothal took place with Puran Singh who was a soldier in the Rani Jhansi's `army. Puran Singh was a soldier of great caliber and his skills were quickly recognized by the Generals in the Army. During Gauri Puja, Jhalkari happened to go to the fort along with some women from the village. It was there that the legendary Lakshmi Bai spotted her and she was taken by surprise the uncanny resemblance of her with Jhalkari. She made inquiries immediately and she came to the bravery acts of Jhalkari Bai. Jhalkari Bai was thereafter quickly inducted into the women's wing of the Lakshmi Bai's army. She was trained to shoot and ignite cannons since Lakshmi Bai's army was preparing for British invasion at that time.

The Mutiny of Sepoys on May 10, 1857, in Meerut gave rise to a number of rebellions by the revolutionaries across North and Central India. It was considered as the first war of Indian independence. Jhansi headed by Rani Lakshmi Bai played a pivotal role in the revolution and struggle for independence from the British raj. Rani Laxmibai spearheaded the rebellion and bravely took on the British forces.

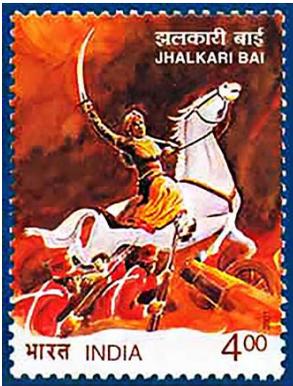
Field Marshal Hugh Henry Rose of the British army in 1858, laid a siege of Jhansi to put an end to the mutiny. It has been well documented in history books that the brave queen took on the British forces from her fort with just an army of 4,000. She could have held on to the fort for long but she was betrayed by one of her own commanders making her defeat imminent. Counselling by her Generals to escape immediately, Laxmibai quietly slipped away from Jhansi on horseback.

That was the moment for Jhalkari and she sprung to action and exhibited an extraordinary bravery and commitment to Rani Lakshmi Bai. Without hesitating and notwithstanding the danger she disguised herself as the Rani Lakshmi Bai and went to the battlefield and took complete command of the army. She thereafter bravely walked to Field Marshal Hugh Henry Rose's camp. Upon reaching, she loudly yelled that she wanted a meeting with the General himself. This plan was both to keep the enemy forces at bay and also give the queen more time to evade capture and reassemble with renewed force to attack the British.

Jhalkari Bai's resemblance to Rani Lakshmi Bai completely confused the British army. According to Bundelkhand legend, when Field Marshal Hugh Henry Rose mistaking her to Rani Lakshmi Bai asked her what punishment should be given to her. Jhalkari Bai without any hesitation said that even she could be hanged to death. Field Marshal Hugh Henry Rose was taken aback as he never expected such a response from the captured Jhalkari Bai. It is reported that he remarked if even one percent of the women in India were to be like her the British would have left the country long ago. It was only a day later, when a man named Dulha Joo identified Jhalkari, that the British learned of the deception. There is some confusion regarding her death. Some accounts place the year of her death as in 1890 and some reports indicate that she was hanged to death by the British.

President Ramnath Kovind unveiled the statue of Jhalkari Bai at Guru Tejh Bahadur Complex in Bhopal on 10 November 2017. Jhalkari Bai memorial park was established in Lalbagh, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. A small park had been established in Jhansi where the statue of Jhalkari Bai was installed. In 2001 a postal stamp was released to honor Jhalkari Bai by the Government of India. There is a statue of Jhalkari Bai established in her honour in Gwalior who bravely defended her people and her country.

Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address at Rastra Raksha Samarpan Parv in Jhansi Uttar Pradesh on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 mentioned about Jhalkari Bai. *"This land has also been a witness to the bravery and military prowess of Veerangana Jhalkari Bai, who was an integral ally of Rani Laxmibai. I also pay my respectful obeisance at the feet of that immortal heroine of the freedom struggle of 1857. "*



Jhalkari's had been ignored in the history books for an exceptionally long time. However, in recent times there has been a concerted effort by historians to highlight the story of this incredible dalit Veerangana and other forgotten and neglected freedom fighters of India.

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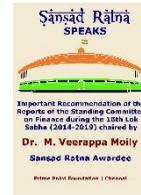
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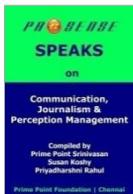
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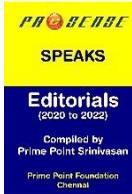
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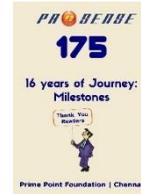
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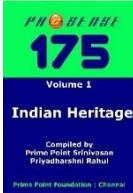
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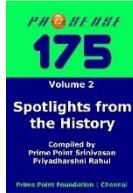
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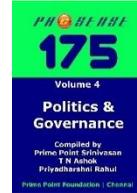
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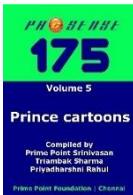
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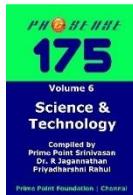
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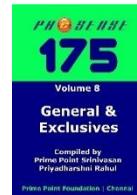
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