



SPEAKS

Valiant Freedom Fighters of India

Compiled by
Prime Point Srinivasan
C. Badri

Prime Point Foundation
Chennai



About Prime Point Foundation



PRIME POINT Foundation

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 25 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 started 5 initiatives viz. eMagazine PreSense, Sansad Ratna Awards, Next Gen Political Leaders, Digital Journalists Association of India and Education Loan Task Force, to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial, and focussed on youth.

About eMagazine PreSense



PreSense: The eMagazine
PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr

APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till July 2024, the Foundation has published 209 editions. 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.

About this Book

This book is the collection of various articles on the Indian Freedom Fighters published in the eMagazine PreSense.

About the Authors



K. Srinivasan, popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan, a senior banker turned Communication professional is the Publisher and Managing Editor of the eMagazine PreSense. He is also the founder of Prime Point Foundation, Digital Journalists Association of India, Next Gen Political Leaders and Education Loan Task Force. Prime Point Foundation honours every year since 2010, the outstanding Indian Parliamentarians with "Sansad Ratna Awards" (meaning Gem of Parliament) based on their individual performance in the House. Srinivasan is based at Chennai, India.



C Badri with forty years of Banking and Finance experience retired as the Chief Vigilance Officer and General Manager of Indian Overseas Bank. He has earlier served as General Manager of Canara Bank. He has held several positions across India handling different portfolios. He is the Consulting Editor to eMagazine PreSense

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www.primepointfoundation.in
www.corpezine.com
editor@corpezine.com

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Introduction

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

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



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

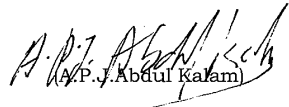
FOREWORD

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 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th 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 <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50 th) Edition launched.
Feb 2011	Diamond Jubilee (60 th) 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 <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Awards.

PreSense Speaks| Freedom Fighters of India

Jun 2013	Platinum Jubilee (75 th) Edition launched by the youth at three places simultaneously, across the nation.
Jun 2015	100 th 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
Aug 2023	Compilation of articles on Freedom fighters Part II launched
Aug 2024	Compilation of articles on Freedom Fighters – Third edition launched

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Team – August 2024

Publisher and
Managing Editor

K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)

Editor in Chief

Ramesh Sundaram, Senior
Journalist, Ex The Hindu

Consulting Editors

C Badri, Former General
Manager, Canara Bank and
CVO, IOB, Chennai

R Nurullah, Senior Journalist

Sakthi Prasanna,
Communication expert

Editor

Priyadharshni Rahul,
Advocate, Supreme Court of
India, New Delhi

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor,
Cartoon Watch, Raipur

Associate Editors

Dipti Kumar, Senior Digital
Journalist from US

Suparna Gangal,
International Video Journalist



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

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, digital Journalist, and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. The foundation is associated with many eminent persons.

In the past 25 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. They 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 2024, the Foundation has published 209 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 2024, the Foundation has conducted 14 editions and presented 125 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner up to the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11th, 12th and 13th 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 raise public and journalist awareness of digital journalism and its implications. 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 17 years. We have published 197 editions till July 2023.

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 100th 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. As part of this PreSense Speaks series, we released the first part of the "Freedom Fighters of India", the compilation of articles published up to August 2022, on 15th August 2022. The Second part of the "Freedom Fighters of India" was released during the Independence Day celebration of 2023 In front of Andama Cellular Jail gate. This third edition compilation of all articles published by us in the past three years is being released at Delhi in August 2024.

I thank Shri C Badri, the Consulting Editor, who has taken all pains to research and write the articles every month. I also thank Shri Ramesh Sundaram, Editor in Chief 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

Andaman Islands – The Capital of the Indian Freedom Movement

Indian History and Textbooks Should be Rewritten with Factual Details of Freedom Fighters who Sacrificed Their Lives

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 23)

The PreSense and Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) Team visited the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the first week of January 2023. The purpose of our visit was to spread democratic and Constitutional awareness amongst the students. With the help of Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma, sitting MP of the Islands, we could visit many schools and a few social projects. He also accompanied us to the schools and we had useful interaction with the youth. We offered to provide online training programme free of cost, to young students who want to join politics, irrespective of the party, on Indian democracy and Constitution.

After the First War of Independence in 1857, British Government transported around 30,000 aggressive and revolutionary freedom fighters to this Island in phases. It was known as Indian Penal Settlement. Freedom fighters were kept in Ross Islands (Now known as Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Island) and Viper Island. In 1906, the Britishers opened the Cellular Jail. Between 1943 and 1945, Japanese forces took control of this Island during World War II. Both British and Japanese authorities tortured our freedom fighters and even killed them.

Sadly, our text books do not talk about such great warriors, who sacrificed themselves to get freedom for us. We found many of the citizens of Andaman Islands are the descendants of one or other freedom fighter. They belong to different States, religion, language. They live peacefully like a family. Though the Island is separated from the mainland, by a distance of 1300 km, their patriotism for Mother India is

enormous. When we visited the Schools, students greeted us with 'Jai Hind'.

A & N Islands consists of 836 small Islands, of which only 37 are inhabited. 84% of the Island is Forest. This Island is strategically important for Indian defence. Hence, the Lt. Governor of this UT is a retired official from the Defence.

Only three years back, this Island got 4G internet connectivity through a single cable laid from Chennai. If the Government adds one more cable and provide a seamless internet facility, many IT companies can set up their back-office and BPO facilities. This is an ideal place for IT Industry, with the availability of skilled manpower.

Though the Island is surrounded on all sides by sea and receives 3000 mm of rain yearly, the people do not get protected drinking water daily. Already, the local MP and the UT Administration are working on some projects. This is a serious issue that the Indian Government must consider urgently.

Shortly, an International Airport will be opened there. This will open up more tourism opportunities. There is a great potential for Shipping and Fisheries, with rare kind of fishes available in the sea.

Though this Island is represented in Lok Sabha, the people feel that they do not have any Legislature and membership in Rajya Sabha.

Sadly, our text books do not carry the contributions made by Andaman and Nicobar Islands during the freedom movement. This is the Capital of the Indian Freedom Movement. Many freedom fighters were tortured and killed. Since many of the freedom fighters were members of Indian Independence League (IIL) and Indian National Army (INA), founded by

Netaji, probably for political reasons, they might have been ignored from the history. Only during the Morarji Desai regime, the Cellular Jail was dedicated to the nation as a 'National Monument'. Many of the freedom fighters who were killed by the British and Japanese authorities have not yet been declared as Freedom Fighters, though many of them have been declared as 'Martyrs'. The descendants of freedom fighters, with whom we spoke feel that their ancestors, who were killed by the British and Japanese authorities, be declared as 'freedom fighters'.

PreSense appeals to the Indian Government:

1. Andaman Island being the capital of freedom movement, Indian history and Text books should be rewritten giving the factual report about the contribution made by thousands of freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for Indian Independence.
2. There is a great potentiality to improve this Island with more employment opportunity in Information Technology, Shipping, Fisheries and Tourism. They should be explored.
3. Above all, the residents should be provided with clean drinking water 24 x 7 x 365 days, besides improving Health and Higher Education facilities. That will be the greatest homage that we, Indians, can pay to their ancestors who sacrificed their lives for the nation.
4. Already Prime Minister Modi has named / renamed some of the Islands. There are many Islands that are not named. Prime Minister may consider naming them after many martyrs/freedom fighters who were killed there by British and Japanese Authorities before Independence.

Every Indian should visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a 'Patriotic Pilgrimage' and pay homage to the freedom fighters.

Andaman - Patriotic Pilgrimage

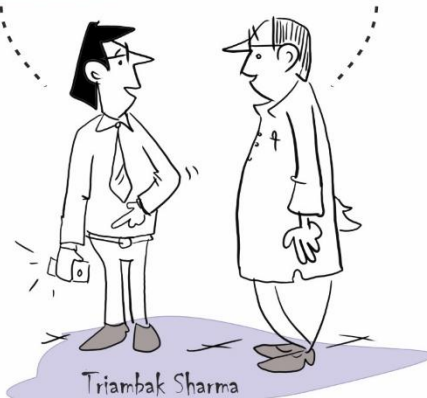
PRINCE

By Triambak Sharma



**Tickets are
booked
for
Andaman &
Nicobar..
we are
going for
PILGRIMAGE**

**I appreciate
your thought
Son..that place
is like any other
religious land
for us..due to
freedom fighters**



Andaman Islands – An overview

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 2023)

Penal Settlement at Andaman Islands



Penal colony prisoners in 1880

After the First War of Independence in 1857, 200 aggressive and revolutionary freedom fighters were transported (literally exiled) to the Andaman Islands. They arrived at the Islands on 10th March 1858. They were kept in Chatham

Island in the open prison. That marked the beginning of the penal settlement in Andamans by the British. All life and long-term prisoners, from eighteen to forty years of age, who on some grounds have escaped the death penalty in India and Burma, were selected for imprisonment in the penal settlement of the Andaman Islands. This was also popularly called 'Kala Pani' (Black Water).

Four days after their first landing on the island, one of the convicts, Narain (Bihar), who had been convicted for sedition, tried to escape but was caught and shot dead. Another prisoner, Naringun Singh (Punjab), who was a deserter, committed suicide by hanging. 86 prisoners who tried to escape were caught by the Britishers and all of them were summarily put to death by hanging on a single day.

As the settlement grew, "hardened criminals" from undivided India and Burma were also brought in. The 'hard labour' of chain gangs quickly produced the necessary infrastructure. Palatial bungalows for the administrators and barracks for the prisoners, jail and formidable gallows sprung up on Ross and Viper Islands between 1864 and 1867. A saw-mill on the Chatham Island supplied the timber.



**The location where
Lord Mayo was
assassinated**

The Viceroy of United India, Lord Mayo, who was on tour at Andaman, paid a visit to the settlement. Sher Ali, serving the Life Sentence stabbed the Viceroy to death on 8th February, 1872. He was arrested immediately and hanged. In the Indian freedom movement, this is the only incident where a sitting Viceroy was assassinated. With the freedom movement picking up momentum, the number of freedom fighters sentenced to transportation also increased. The need arose for a high security jail that could hold a large number in solitary confinement.

Cellular Jail



Cellular Jail – Main entrance

The construction of Cellular Jail started in 1896 and completed in 1906. Spread as seven spokes of a bicycle wheel, this unique three-storied structure was the first of its kind in India as it had 693 cells specially built for solitary confinement of the prisoners. Extraordinary feature of the Jail was the

total absence of communication between prisoners housed in different wings since front of the row of cells faced the back of the other. The cost of construction at that time was Rs.5.17 lakhs.

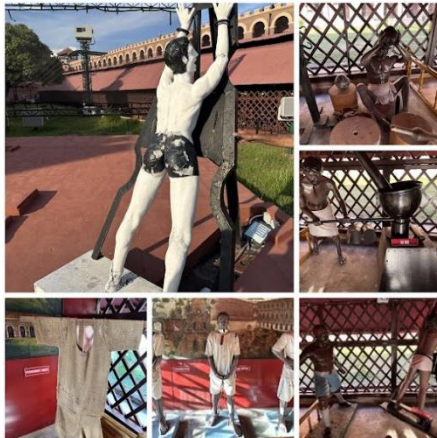


A model of the Cellular Jail with seven wings

A two-storied building on the left side near the entrance of the Jail was constructed to be used as the Jail hospital. On the plinth of this building now stands the

Martyr's Column. Near the compound wall at the right of the main entrance is the gallows where three persons could be executed simultaneously with a separate door in the outer compound wall to carry the corpses.

Many charismatic freedom fighters were imprisoned in this Jail. Savarkar brothers, Hotilal Verma, Babu Ram Hari, Pandit Parmanand, Ladha Ram, Ullaskar Dutt, Barin Kumar Ghosh, Bhai Parmanand, Indu Bhushan Roy, Prithvi Singh Azad, Pulin Das, Trailokyanath Chakravorthy, Gurumukh Singh, etc. were incarcerated here among others. Revolutionaries involved in Alipore Bomb case, Nasik Conspiracy Case, Lahore Conspiracy Case, Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case, Gaya Conspiracy Case were also brought to the Cellular Jail under long terms of imprisonment.



Instruments of torture

The Cellular Jail is the most prominent landmark of Port Blair and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The first stop for any dignitary visiting the Islands is the Martyrs Memorial inside the Jail. Many familiar with the history of the freedom struggle are moved to tears at the sight of the Chain fetter, Cross Bar fetter, Bar fetter, flogging frame with whipping, Jute uniform, oil extraction, Coir pounding to extract coir from coconut husk and the other instruments of torture on display in the Jail Museum. A 'must' on the itinerary of all tourists is the 'Sound & Light Show' every evening, which brings to life a dark chapter in the history of the Islands as a penal settlement.

The Jail celebrated its centenary on March 10, 2006. It has been a long journey for the Jail - from a torture machine to a National Memorial, from a dreaded prison to a place of patriotic pilgrimage, a place where the memories of brave freedom fighters are revived and patriotic fervour surges through the veins of the visitors.



Outer and Inner A view of the Cell

Today, the entrance block of the National Memorial houses Freedom Fighters Photos and Exhibition Gallery is on the ground floor. The first floor of the building has an Art Gallery, a Netaji Gallery and a Library on the freedom movement. A gallery on the First War of Independence and another gallery with a rare collection of old photographs has also been set up on the premises. An eternal Flame "Freedom-Swatantrya Jyot" has been erected in the vicinity of the Cellular Jail in memory of all freedom fighters and martyrs.

Structure

Each of the seven wings has three stories upon completion. There are no dormitories, with a total of 696 cells. Each cell is 13.6 ft × 7.6 ft in size, with a ventilator located at a height of 7 ft. The name "Cellular Jail" is derived from the solitary cells that prevented any prisoner from communicating with any other. Also, the spokes were so designed such that the face of a cell in a spoke saw the back of cells in another spoke. This way, communication between prisoners was impossible. They were all in solitary confinement. The locks of the prison cells were designed in such a way that the inmate would never be able to reach the latch of the lock.



Gallows – Top: Place for ritual before execution | Bottom right: Execution chamber | Bottom left: Place for dead body after execution

Prison conditions

Conditions faced by prisoners in the Cellular Jail were horrible. They faced torture, medical tests, forced labour and for many, death. In response to poor conditions in the Cellular Jail, including the quality of prison food, numerous prisoners went on hunger strikes. The prison authorities often force-fed those who did. It is also said that many of them died due to force-feeding.

Andaman Island was the ideal place for the British Government to isolate the aggressive and revolutionary freedom fighters from the rest of the society. These people were kept in solitary confinement in the Cellular Jail.

Massacre of 44 ILL Members

During the World War II, in 1942, Japan took over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Britishers left. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose arrived at Port Blair and hoisted the Indian Tri Colour in Dec. 1943 at Cellular Jail. After Bhowe had left, on 30 January 1944, 44 Indians, the members of the Indian Independence League (ILL), were wrongly accused of spying and shot by the Japanese Army in what was known as the Homfraygunj Massacre.



After the end of World War II, Japan surrendered to the British Army and the British re-occupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. During this period of three years, Japan had committed more atrocities.

Cellular Jail was made a National Monument by Prime Minister Morarji Desai in 1979. The Airport is named after Veer Savarkar. Ross Island is named after Netaji Subash Chandra Bose by Prime Minister Modi. Also the

21 unnamed Islands were named after Param Vir Chakra recipients in Jan 2023 by Prime Minister Modi.

Just like every Indian makes a spiritual pilgrimage to Kasi, Mecca and Jerusalem, they should also make a 'Patriotic Pilgrimage' to the Andaman Islands and pay homage to the great freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for our Independence.

44 Freedom Fighters Were Shot Dead and put in a Graveyard at the Andaman Islands

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 2023)

Prem Shanker Pandey was one of the 44 members of Indian Independence League (IIL) martyred by Japanese Army on 30th January 1944 without any trial and buried in a 'L' shaped pit at Andaman Islands. Till now, these martyrs have not been declared as Freedom Fighters by the Government of India, though a monument has been erected and maintained by the UT Government to honour them. Gauri Shanker Pandey (87), the only son of Prem Shanker Pandey (35), is the lone surviving eye witness for the happenings. PreSense team met him at his residence on 6th January 2023. He recalled that sad episode from his memory. He has also authored four books on the freedom movement in the Andaman Islands. During the course of the conversation, while narrating the incident of his father's arrest and killing, he became emotional on many occasions. Excerpts:



Prime Point Srinivasan seeking blessings from Gauri

Why did Britishers leave the Island enabling Japanese Army to occupy?

More than 30,000 people were settled in the Islands, in what is known as 'Indian Penal settlement', by the British after the first war of Independence in 1857. During World War II, Britishers left this Island in mid-March leaving all the Penal Settlers alone. After the Britishers left, there was no Government till Japanese Army occupied the island on 23rd March, 1942. Everybody was free to do whatever they wanted. At that time, the branch of Indian Independence League (IIL) was organized at Andaman in April 1942 under the President of Dr Diwan Singh. At the global level, Rash Behari Bose was heading the IIL. In June 1942, Indian National Army (INA) was founded. Both the organisations were created to participate in the freedom struggle and they were anti-British. Ramakrishna and my father Prem Shanker Pandey, were the Joint Secretaries of IIL. The members of IIL visited all the villages in the Island and increased the membership.

What led to the arrest of IIL and INA Members?

The IIL and INA, who were against British regime, were growing in the Island fast. This had created worries for British Government. Though the British had left the Island leaving behind all the penal settlers, they wanted to break IIL and INA. In January 1943, British sent spy agents to Andaman under the leadership of D.A.M. McCarthy, who was the Commander of Indian Military Police, during the British administration. Some of the Indian Military Police people had also joined Japanese Army as 'spies of British Government'. The messages sent by McCarthy were intercepted by Japanese forces and they got perplexed. Using this opportunity, the real spies working in the Japanese Army falsely implicated the members of IIL and INA as spies. The genuine freedom fighters were branded as spies. Some of the Indian Military Police were the real culprits.

How were they arrested? What happened thereafter?



Flogging stand – Prisoner would be tied to a stand and he would be beaten on the back side with whip

Immediately Japanese Forces arrested the IIL Members. In the first batch, 50 members were arrested and taken to Cellular Jail. They labelled the cases as first spy case, second spy case, etc. My father was arrested in the second group. One Muthuswamy Naidu was arrested as the first person along with 49 others in the first group. He was tortured heavily to make him admit that he was a British Spy. He was placed on the table with his hands tied. Water was poured through his nose. He was forced to say that he was a British Spy. He refused to say this, in spite of all the tortures. The water went into his lungs and he died due to the torture. All the other people were also tortured like this. The prisoners were tied to

the flogging stand and they used to bring their respective wives naked before them and tied. The husbands were tortured before wives and vice versa. They violated all the international norms. All prohibited war crimes were perpetuated. All the arrested members of IIL denied spying. There were even two or three lady members. Due to the torture many people died.

On 30th March 1943, Narayan Rao and six other leaders of IIL were shot dead and the bodies were handed over to their relatives. They were the people who initiated the establishment of IIL and INA at the Island.

Why was your father arrested?

Dr Diwan Singh, President of the Indian Independence League (IIL) met the Governor and sought his intervention to mitigate the people's misery. He also represented him as to how genuine people were arrested and tortured. But it was of no use. The second group of members of IIL, including Dr Diwan Singh and my father were arrested on 27th October 1943. In the spy cases, 630 people were arrested and tortured. Dr Diwan Singh was brutally tortured and died due to torture in the Cellular Jail.

What were the types of tortures they used to give to freedom fighters?

The Japanese beat and tortured them with water treatment, electric shocks, hanging them upside down, and burning heaps of paper under their thighs and private parts. A very large number of them died, while some committed suicide and a few made false confessions to save their lives. They were taken to a far-flung place, killed and buried.

Dr Diwan Singh was brutally tortured for 82 days, a parallel of which is difficult to find in human history. He was hung by his hair from the ceiling. On other occasions, his ankles were tied to ceiling, water was pumped through his mouth and nostrils.

He was tied to a table, his bones were crunched and was subjected to electric shocks. He died on January 14, 1944.

How was your father treated in the Jail?

I was a small boy of 6 years when my father was arrested and taken by Japanese forces. I still remember that my grandmother, my mother and myself were crying when he was taken by the Police. My father was around 35 at that time. My mother was also arrested 6 times and kept in Cellular Jail. Both were tortured heavily. I was the only son and had four sisters. Imagine the panic of the children when their parents were arrested and tortured in jail. We were staying with our uncle due to this uncertainty.

When did Netaji visit the Island? Why Netaji was not informed?



**Prem Shanker Pandey and
his wife**

He landed at the Island on 29th December 1943. INA gave him a Guard of Honour. He was received at the Airport by the IIL members and INA. He hoisted the Tricolour flag (the flag designed by the Congress then) at the Gymkhana Grounds on 30th December, 1943. At that time National Song "Vande Mataram Sujalam Suphalam

Malayaja Shitalam" was sung. Japanese forces did not allow any people to meet Netaji. He met the Governor and was immediately taken to Ross Island (now renamed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island). Nobody was allowed to go to the Ross Island. Japanese Army ensured that he was not given information about the arrest and torture of IIL and INA members. Ramakrishna, then President of IIL, handed over an amount of Rs.10000/- towards freedom struggle. Everybody contributed to the fund to Netaji. The descendants of these

settlers had enough courage to fight against the British. They formed the IIL and INA.

On 31st December 1943, the women's wing of IIL organised a meeting to hear Netaji at the Headquarters of the IIL and the INA. I remember I also attended the meeting with my mother and my grandmother. I remember it was a big crowd and the hall was full. The Women's Wing presented Rs.5000/- and lot of jewels to Netaji for freedom movement. That was the spirit of our people.

Coming back to your father in Cellular Jail, how was he martyred?

On 28th January 1944, our family was informed to come to Cellular Jail to meet our father. They asked us to bring one shirt and eatables. When we visited the Jail, I saw my father coming from the second gate with beard (Gauri Shanker Pandey paused for a moment here and broke



Freedom fighters lined up at Homfraygunj before they were shot by Japanese Army on 30th Jan 1944. Prem Shanker Pandey is third from right

down heavily. After a long silence, he continued the conversation). My mother, my grandmother and all the children were there. That was the last time, we could see our father. (broke down again and after a long silence continued). My father spoke to my mother and my grandmother. I do not remember anything further. We handed over the shirt and the food item to the police officials there.

On 29th January 1944, we got the information from Japanese Authorities asking all the family members to assemble on the next day morning (30th January) before the main entrance of Cellular Jail. When we reached the Cellular Jail on 30th January morning, we saw the relatives of some more prisoners also. All the 44 prisoners were brought from inside the jail one by one and members of the families were marshalled on the road side. My father Prem Shanker Pandey was the first to come out. I could see him from the distance of 15 or 20 feet but we were not allowed to go near him. Three military trucks were parked. All the 44 prisoners boarded them one by one. My father was the first to board. On seeing us, my father shouted, "Take care of the family. We are going to be killed on the false charges. We are going to die for the nation to get freedom for our country and not as spies. Jai Hind". On seeing him shouting, one Army Officer hit him on his chest with the butt of his rifle and my father fell down (Gauri Shanker Pandey paused and wept). After a long silence he continued:

All the prisoners were shouting 'Jai Hind'



Martyred freedom fighters – Soldiers pushing the bodies in the 'L' shaped pit

and the family members started crying. Out of this 44, three people could not walk. They were carried in a gunny bag like a stretcher. Nobody knew where they were being taken. I have seen all the 44 members

being transported to an unknown place. It was a horrible experience.

On the next day, one Japanese Police came to our house and handed over a packet containing the shirt worn by my father. This was the shirt given at the Cellular Jail by us on 28th January when we met our father. I only received the packet from the Police officer. The shirt had a 'bullet hole' and lot of blood stain. (After a brief silence, he continued). Only after seeing the shirt with blood and bullet holes, we realised that our father was killed.

When did you get detailed information about the massacre of 44 IIL members?



Left: Balidan Vedi – Homfraygunj – The memorial erected in 1977 | Right: 'L' shaped graveyard where martyrs were shot and buried

We came to know about the martyred place only later. Immediately after this incident, Netaji's Azadi Government was formed. Then Chief Commissioner Colonel A.D.

Loganathan visited Singapore reported to Netaji about this incident. Netaji sent Japanese judges to investigate into the matter. Due to the failure of Japanese intelligence and the Government, they could not locate the real culprits. After the World War II, Japanese surrendered to British forces. Again, Britishers occupied this Island on 7th October, 1945.

We could visit Homfraygunj, where the 44 IIL members were martyred only after two years, when the Japanese forces left the Island. All our family members went there in a truck, whose driver was the same person who drove the vehicle from Cellular Jail to Homfraygunj on that fateful day. The Japanese forces killed all the 44 IIL members and put them in a 'L' shaped graveyard. As the only son of my father, I had to perform the rituals without the body or ashes.

Are the family members of 44 martyrs are now connected?

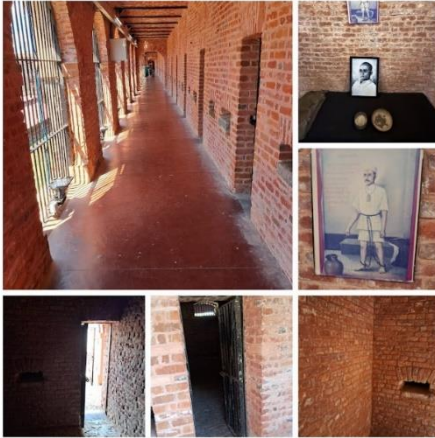
All the family members of 44 martyrs got together to form a 'Homfraygunj Martyrs Memorial Committee' and I was the General Secretary of the Committee then. Now the third generation is leading it. Out of 44 families, 20 are in this Island and the others are in Mainland. We constructed a memorial in 1978. Every year on 30th January, in a solemn ceremony, we assemble and pay homage to the Martyrs. Now the UT Government is maintaining the Memorial. The Government has declared all the members of IIL, who were killed during the freedom movement as 'Martyrs'.

We do not want anything. We only want the Government to declare all the 44 martyrs as 'Freedom Fighters'. I feel proud that I am the son of a freedom fighter who has sacrificed his life for the nation.

Jai Hind. Bharat Mata ki Jai

Veer Savarkar in Andaman prison

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 2023)



The cell where Veer Savarkar spent 11 years

We will be ungrateful, if we downplay for selfish and political interests, the sacrifices and sufferings of Veer Savarkar and his family. When we visited Cellular Jail in the first week of January 2023, we also visited the Cell where Veer Savarkar was kept for 11 years. We were not able to stay there even for 10 minutes, in the midst of walls. Imagine, how Veer Savarkar might have spent his 11 years in this horrible Cell all alone. He was given

a mud pot and a bucket of water. The prisoners have to use the mud pot for nature's call and use the water both for drinking and cleaning.

The Jail officials say that he was a revolutionary even when he was in the Cellular Jail. He refused to take food protesting against the atrocities of the British Jail authorities. He was also fed forcibly.

Bot Veer Savarkar and his elder brother were kept in Cellular Jail and tortured. Veer Savarkar was even chained. His house properties were confiscated by the British at Pune. His family was suffering.

During the freedom movement, there were differences of views between the top leaders on the methodology. Followers

of Mahatma Gandhi thought Ahimsa would yield results. Netaji followers adopted a different path. But both had the same goal of getting freedom for the country. Veer Savarkar was an aggressive and revolutionary leader. The British was really scared of him. Way back in 1905, he wanted foreign textiles to be boycotted and the same was later adopted by Mahatma Gandhi. He assisted Bikaji Cama to hoist the Indian Flag at German in 1907.

He was an atheist. He wanted the Indian History to be rewritten with more focus on Indian glory and not glorifying invaders. This had angered the British and liberals then. His concept of 'Hindutva' is more confused with the present day political 'Hindutva'. Though he was accused in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, the trial court exonerated him then itself. Again in 2018 on a petition to review the exoneration, Supreme Court Bench itself exonerated him.

He is accused of writing apology letter to the British Government. It was customary to write mercy petition to the Government whenever somebody was arrested. Now, we file 'bail application' in the court. As a lawyer himself, he used to write petitions to all other jail mates for their release or for reducing the punishment. Even Communist leader SA Dange has also written such petitions. After his sixth petition, a team visited him in the jail and heard him. They reported back to the Government that he was adamant and he did not regret. Misrepresenting a routine legal procedure by some of the leaders is not good. In spite of all the facts, some political leaders spread false information about Veer Savarkar and denigrate his great sacrifices. There can be thousands of political differences. This should not stand in the way of saluting the great freedom fighters. Let us be grateful to them. Abusing them and denigrating them would not be in the interest of the nation.

Freedom Fighters of India

Ambedkar

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (April 2015)

With the 125th 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 14th 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 Gaaekwad 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 20th Sep 1932 against the 'Separate Electorate' for Depressed Class. After some lengthy negotiations, Ambedkar and Gandhi reached an agreement on 24th 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 30th 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 29th 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 26th November 1949 and came into force on 26th 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 15th 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 14th 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 6th Dec 1956 in his sleep.

His Bold Views



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

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.

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.



Dr B.R. Ambedkar

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.

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 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. These two marches galvanised the entire India.



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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.



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 15th 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 26th 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.

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.



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

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.

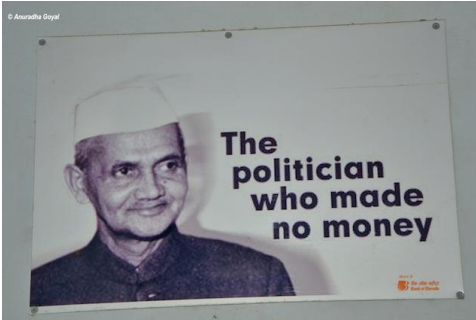
Rajaji died on 25th December 1972, after a short illness. It is interesting to know that when Rajaji's parents checked his horoscope at the time of his birth, the astrologer told them that the baby's future included the fortunes of a king, of an exile, of a guru, and of an outcast. The people would worship 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.

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, but family members persuaded him to do so. Being a simple person, he had only Rs.7000/—in his bank account. A Fiat car cost Rs.12,000/—then. He applied for a bank loan of Rs.5000/-. When he died at Tashkent on 11th Jan 1966, his loan account was not cleared fully.

Mysterious Death of Shastri

After signing an agreement with Pakistan in Tashkent (Soviet Union) on 10th Jan 1966, he died in his hotel room on 11th 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 – 10th 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 2nd 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 9th 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.

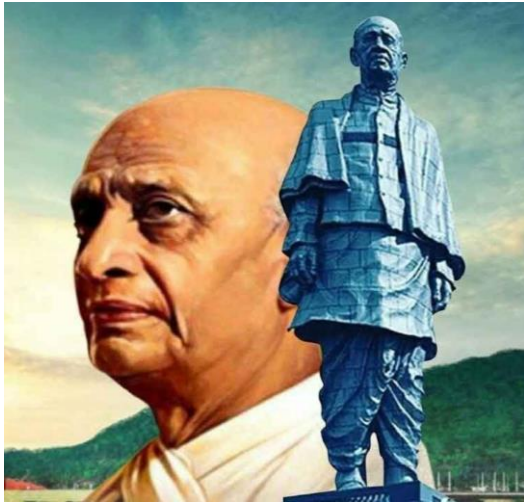
The nation remembers Lal Bahadur Shastri with reverence, and salutes him for his contribution to the nation.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor

Iron Man of India

Vallabhbhai Patel, popularly known as Sardar Patel and the Ironman of India, was an Indian Barrister, Statesman, and a prominent leader of the Indian Independence movement. He played a crucial role in shaping the post-independence landscape of India. Patel was the first Deputy Prime Minister and the first Home Minister of independent India, a testament to his significant contributions to the nation.



Gandhi's life and his principles had a huge effect on Patel's life and ideologies. When Gandhi gave a call for the Non-cooperation Movement, Patel left his flourishing practice and dedicated himself to the independence struggle. He also supported and followed Gandhi's path of non-violence and stood resolutely alongside Gandhi, even when other leaders did not agree with some of Gandhi's ideas. Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement faced opposition, but Patel supported him. On Gandhi's suggestion, he took back his candidacy for the election of the president of the Indian National Congress in 1946.

Childhood and Education

Sardar Patel was born Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel in 1875, in Nadiad, Gujarat, British India, into a middle-class agricultural family of the Lewa Patidar community. Though there is no official record of his birth date, October 31 is mentioned on his matriculation exam papers. He was the fourth of six children of Jhaverbhai Patel and his wife, Laadbai. His father had participated in the 1857 Mutiny in the army of Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi.

Growing up in a traditional Hindu family, Patel spent his early childhood on his family's agricultural fields in Karamsad. By his late teens, he had completed his middle school education at Karamsad. In 1891, he was married to Jhaverba when he was 16. At 22, he completed his matriculation from a high school in Nadiad in 1897.

Patel aimed to work and save enough money to study law in England. After schooling, he studied by borrowing law books and passed the District Pleader's examination. In 1900, he started his law practice in Godhra, where he brought his wife, Jhaverba, from her parents' place, and they set up a home together. They had two children: a daughter, Maniben (born in 1904), and a son, Dahyabhai (born in 1906).

Association with Mahatma Gandhi

With his hard work and dedication, Patel became a capable lawyer. During a plague epidemic, he contracted the disease while nursing a friend. Leaving his family, he went to Nadiad to recuperate. In 1902, Patel moved to Borsad in Kheda district to practice law, where he successfully handled challenging court cases. With his earnings, he saved enough money to go to England to study law.

In 1909, Patel's wife took seriously ill and was operated upon in a hospital in Bombay (now Mumbai). Unfortunately, she did not recover. When she died, Patel was in a court in Anand. He

received a note bearing the news, read it, but continued with his case without giving any indication till the end. He did not marry again.

At 36, Patel went to England in 1910 to study law at the Middle Temple Inn. With his hard work, he not only completed the course months earlier but also achieved the top place in Roman law. Patel returned to India in February 1913 and established a successful practice in Ahmedabad. As an eminent barrister in criminal law, he led a westernized lifestyle. Known for his courteous behavior, western clothes, and expertise in the game of bridge, he wasn't initially interested in politics. However, a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi in 1917 changed his views. Inspired by Gandhi's ideologies, Patel became his follower. In 1917, Patel was elected the sanitation commissioner of Ahmedabad.

Active role in the Indian National Movement

Joining India's independence movement, Patel motivated the people of Borsad in September 1917 to join Gandhi's demand for independence. He joined the Indian National Congress' Gujarat Sabha as secretary and helped in Gandhi's campaigns. Kheda district faced a plague epidemic in 1917, followed by a famine in 1918. Despite crop failures, the British government refused to exempt the land revenue. Patel led the agitation of the farmers and Zamindars to get tax exemption. During the three-month-long campaign, he grew close to Gandhi. Visiting several villages, he motivated farmers to revolt against the government without any violence by not paying taxes. Several farmers and volunteers were arrested, lands were seized, and people faced harassment, but the resistance effort paid off and the government was forced to exempt the taxes.

In 1920, Patel was elected President of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee, a post he served till 1945. Leaving his successful legal practice, he joined Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. He and his children burned their western

clothing in bonfires organized to boycott British goods. He started wearing Indian attire made of Khadi (Indian handloom cotton). He traveled extensively, recruiting 300,000 members and collecting a fund of Rs. 1.5 million.

In 1923, while Gandhi was in prison, Patel led the Satyagraha Movement in Nagpur when the British banned hoisting the Indian flag. He succeeded in obtaining consent to hoist the flag publicly and got the prisoners released who were arrested for hoisting the flag.

From 1924 to 1928, Patel was chosen as the President of the municipal committee of Ahmedabad. During these years, he implemented several sanitation, water supply, administration, and town planning programs. He also worked towards social reforms, including the prohibition of untouchability, casteism, and alcoholism.

Involvement in Bardoli Satyagraha and Beyond

In 1928, the government raised land revenue at a time when farmers in Bardoli taluka of Surat district were already facing famine. Patel toured the villages to gauge the condition. Before launching a Satyagraha, he forewarned the villagers of the difficulties and asked them to maintain non-violence and unity. As per Patel's call for a non-cooperation movement on February 12, 1928, the farmers refused to pay the taxes demanded by the government. The government responded by arresting farmers and confiscating their lands, but the farmers did not give in. Many Satyagrahas were undertaken all over Gujarat to express solidarity and sympathy with the Bardoli farmers. The agitation continued for six months, while Patel carried on his negotiations with the government. His efforts bore fruit in August, and the administration returned the seized lands and postponed the implementation of the increased tax. The success of the Bardoli Satyagraha earned him the name Sardar or Chief.

In 1930, Gandhi gave the call for the Dandi March and Salt Satyagraha to protest against the salt tax. As one of the leaders, Patel was arrested before the Dandi March on March 7, 1930. He was tried without any witnesses or lawyers. After Gandhi's arrest, the agitation intensified, demanding the release of the two leaders. Patel was released in June and took on responsibilities as the Congress president in Gandhi's absence. However, he was arrested once again.

Patel was elected the President of the 46th session of the Indian National Congress at Karachi in March 1931. Congress approved the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, though Nehru and Bose did not totally agree with the terms. The same day, Bhagat Singh and associates were executed in Lahore. The Karachi session of Congress faced a lot of turmoil. Thereafter, the Indian National Congress agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference in London. However, the Conference did not succeed, and subsequently, Gandhi, Patel, and several other leaders were arrested. Patel was with Gandhi in Yerwada Jail from January 1931 to May 1933. When Gandhi protested against the allocation of separate electorates for untouchables by starting a fast-unto-death, Patel looked after him. Later, he was shifted to Nasik Jail for one year and was released in 1934.

As per the Government of India Act 1935, Congress decided to participate in the elections to provincial legislatures. Patel played an important role in raising funds and selecting candidates for these elections. The Indian National Congress won in 7 out of 11 provinces. As the chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-committee, he guided the ministries.

Contribution to Post-Independent India

Patel was the first Deputy Prime Minister and the first Home Minister of independent India. The British had given two choices to the Indian princely states – they could either join India or Pakistan or stay independent. This created a lot of uncertainty. As the Home Minister, Patel had a herculean task

of convincing the princely states to join India. With his tactful negotiation, he succeeded in integrating over 560 states into the Indian Union. A few states like Junagadh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Hyderabad did not comply. Without these states joining the Indian Union, the country would have been disjointed, so Patel used force to deal with them. Because of his efforts, today India stands as an integrated nation.

In September 1947, when Pakistan tried to invade Kashmir, Patel asked the rulers of Kashmir to accede to India, after which he ordered the army to drive away the invaders and reclaim the invaded territories. Patel was the driving force behind creating the All India Services, which he knew would be essential for providing a firm infrastructure to the new nation. He was also an important part of the Constituent Assembly of India. The Somnath Temple in Saurashtra was restored under his supervision.

Death and Legacy

Patel suffered a heart-attack after Gandhi's assassination in 1948. His health began to deteriorate in the latter half of 1950. In December, he was taken to Bombay. He had a second heart-attack, and died on December 15, 1950. In 1980, the *Sardar Patel National Memorial* was opened at *Moti Shahi Mahal*, Ahmedabad. A major dam on River Narmada (Gujarat) was dedicated to him as *Sardar Sarovar Dam*. The international airport in Ahmedabad and several academic institutions are named after Patel.

He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian award, *Bharat Ratna*, in 1991. In 2014, it was announced that the nation would annually celebrate Patel's birthday, October 31st, as *Rashtriya Ekta Diwas* or *National Unity Day*.

Statue of Unity

The world's tallest statue, the 182-meter (597 feet) tall Statue of Unity, was dedicated to him on October 31, 2018. It is approximately 3.2 km away from Sadhu Bet near Vadodara, Gujarat. The Statue of Unity complex is spread over an area of about 20000 square meters. It was built at an approximate cost of 29.8 billion rupees (\$425m), the entire complex is surrounded by an artificial lake.

JAI HIND

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor



Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, an iconic Indian nationalist, left an indelible mark on India's struggle for independence with his unwavering patriotism and revolutionary zeal. Known for founding the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army), his stirring slogan, "Tum Mujhe Khoon Do, Main Tumhe Azadi Dunga" (Give me blood, and I will give you freedom), continues to resonate with Indians.

The history of India's struggle for freedom is often narrated through the lens of nonviolent movements, overshadowing the equally significant story of armed resistance against colonial rule. However, the contributions of revolutionaries such as Vinayak Savarkar, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rash Behari Bose, Bagha Jatin, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Subhas Chandra Bose are crucial to understanding

the full scope of the independence movement. These figures are typically celebrated as solitary heroes, but their actions were part of a larger, coordinated effort that significantly impacted the fight for freedom.

Revolutionaries formed an extensive network that sustained armed resistance against the British Empire. Their efforts spanned not only across India but also extended to international hubs, establishing strongholds in Britain, France, Thailand, Germany, Persia, Russia, Italy, Ireland, the United States, Japan, and Singapore. This global network facilitated collaboration, strategic planning, and resource sharing, bolstering the movement's strength and reach.

At various times, these revolutionaries garnered official support and recognition from several foreign governments, enhancing their capacity to challenge British colonial authority. This was far from a series of isolated acts of heroism; it was a comprehensive movement involving a multitude of extraordinary young men and women interconnected through shared ideals and objectives. They adapted to evolving geopolitical events and leveraged international alliances, significantly influencing the trajectory of India's quest for independence.

Early Life and Education

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa, to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose. His father was a distinguished lawyer who received the title of "Rai Bahadur." Bose's early education took place at the Protestant European School (now Stewart High School) in Cuttack, followed by studies at Presidency College in Kolkata. Influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, Bose's nationalist fervor was kindled at the age of 16.

To fulfill his parents' wishes, Bose pursued further education at the University of Cambridge in England, preparing for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) exams. Although he passed the ICS examination in 1920, he resigned from his position in April 1921, returning to India to join the nationalist movement amidst growing political unrest.

Political Involvement and Leadership in the Indian National Congress

Upon his return, Bose joined Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement, which aimed to make the Indian National Congress (INC) a powerful, non-violent organization. Under Gandhi's guidance, Bose collaborated with Chittaranjan Das, who became his political mentor. As a youth educator and commandant of the Bengal Congress volunteers, Bose also founded the newspaper 'Swaraj.' After his release from prison in 1927, he became the general secretary of the Congress party, working closely with Jawaharlal Nehru.

In 1938, Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress and established a national planning committee to promote broad industrialization, a vision that contrasted with Gandhi's emphasis on cottage industries and local resources. Despite his re-election in 1939, Bose resigned due to the lack of support from Gandhi, earning the moniker "Rebel President."

Formation of the Forward Bloc

In 1939, Bose founded the All India Forward Bloc, a left-wing nationalist political party, aiming to consolidate radical elements within the Congress. The Forward Bloc advocated for complete independence and the principles of equality and social justice, reflecting Bose's socialist inclinations.

The Indian National Army (INA) and Azad Hind Fauj

One of the most significant developments in India's freedom struggle during World War II was the formation of the Indian National Army (INA), also known as Azad Hind Fauj. The INA was initially organized by Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary living in Japan, who established the Indian Independence League with the support of Indians in Southeast Asia. The INA was formed from Indian prisoners of war captured by Japan and aimed to liberate India from British rule.

In 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose escaped from India and sought support for India's independence in Germany. By 1943, he arrived in Singapore to lead the Indian Independence League and revitalize the INA, transforming it into a formidable force. The INA, comprising about 45,000 soldiers, included Indian prisoners of war and expatriates from Southeast Asia.

On October 21, 1943, Bose, now revered as Netaji, declared the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) in Singapore. He even hoisted the Indian flag in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which were occupied by Japan. In early 1944, three INA units launched an attack on northeastern India, marking a passionate but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to expel the British from Indian soil.

Despite their failure, the INA's efforts and the slogan "Delhi Chalo" (On to Delhi) inspired Indians both within and outside the country. Bose's vision of an independent India united people across different religions and regions, galvanizing support for the cause of freedom.

Ideological Beliefs and Approach

Bose's militant approach and socialist policies set him apart from other leaders of the time. While the broader nationalist movement often viewed Japan with suspicion due to its aggressive expansionism, Bose believed that Japanese

support, combined with a strong internal uprising, could end British rule in India. This strategic alliance highlighted his pragmatic approach to achieving independence.

Legacy and Influence

Subhas Chandra Bose's life was marked by extraordinary leadership skills and a charismatic oratory that galvanized the masses. His famous slogans, including "Jai Hind" (Victory to India), continue to echo in the national consciousness. Bose's ability to rally diverse groups under the banner of the INA exemplified his inclusive vision for India's independence.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose passed away on August 18, 1945, in a hospital in Taiwan, succumbing to injuries sustained in a plane crash. His death remains shrouded in mystery, with various theories and controversies surrounding the circumstances. However, his legacy as a tireless freedom fighter and visionary leader endures.

Bose's contributions to the freedom struggle serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by countless individuals. Netaji's unwavering dedication, revolutionary spirit, and visionary leadership continue to inspire generations of Indians in their pursuit of justice, equality, and national pride.

Memorials

Our Postal Department has issued postal stamps featuring Netaji during 1964, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2016, 2018 and 2021. Bose also featured in ₹2 coins in 1996 and 1997, ₹75 coin in 2018 and ₹125 coin in 2021. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata was established. Many Railway stations were established in his name such as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Gomoh railway station at Gomoh, Jharkhand. Netaji Express, a train runs between Howrah and Kalka, Cuttack Netaji Bus Terminal at Cuttack, Netaji Bhavan metro station and Netaji metro

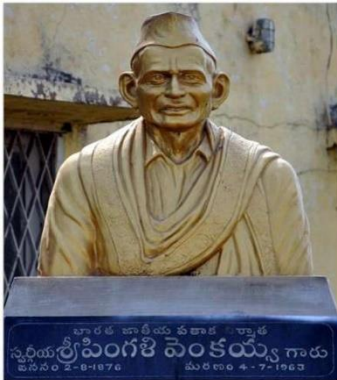
station at Kolkata and Netaji Subhash Place metro station at Delhi. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island at Andaman and Nicobar Island, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Setu (Odissa's longest bridge) at Cuttack and many other institutions in India are named after him.

In 2021, the GOI declared 23 January as Parakram Divas to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji. GOI inaugurated a museum on Netaji and his INA at Red Fort, Delhi. In 2022, GOI inaugurated his Statue at India Gate. In the same year, GOI started an official award Subhas Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar, for those who does excellent work in Disaster management.

Pingali Venkaiah

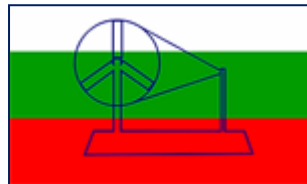
By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (August 2014)

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 colours and the significance of the flag generally remained 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-coloured flag of the Congress Party eventually became the tri-coloured 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.

Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharathi

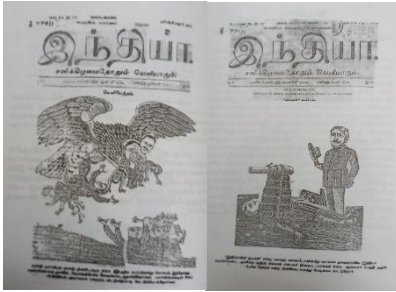
By Srinivas Gopal, Editorial Team (Sep 2021)

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.

Jai Hind Champakaraman Pillai

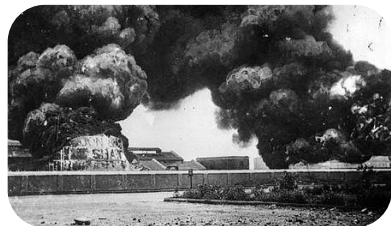
By C. Badri, Editorial Advisor (Oct 2021)

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, Dadabhoy 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, Vithalbhai Patel (brother of Sardar Vallabhai Patel), M.N. Roy, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler and many other Nazi Party leaders. He was also an inspiration for Netaji 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. Sethuseshan, Assistant General Manager (Retd), Indian Overseas Bank and grandson of Dr. Champakaraman Pillai.)

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 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.



*Life size statue of
Rani Abbakka at
Ullal*

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.

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.

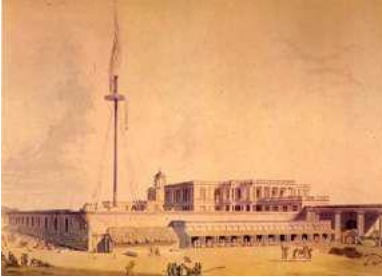
Many Indians are under the impression that our National Flag has been flying atop only since 15th August 1947. Very few are aware that on 26th January 1932 at 2 a.m., someone had dared to bring down the Union Jack and hoist the Indian Tricolor at the prestigious flag post of Fort St. George at Madras. 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.

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 3rd 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.

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 4th 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

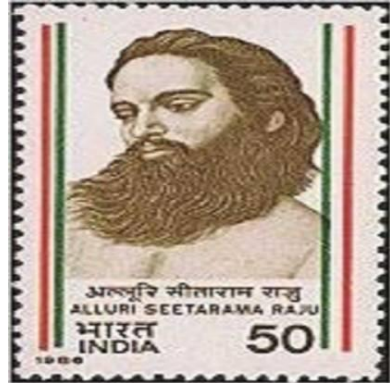
hardly eight years old. After his father's death he moved to his mother's hometown of Visakhapatnam. Later he enrolled at Mrs. A.V.N. College for further education. During that period, he frequently visited far flung areas in the Visakhapatnam district and got familiarized with the struggles of the tribal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

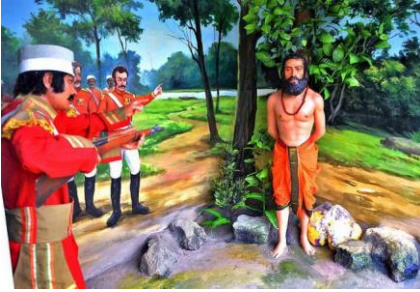
natural leader. The British Government then tried to cajole him over by offering 60 acres of fertile land for his Ashram for peace making but Sitarama Raju rejected the offer and stood by the tribal people.

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, but 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." Netaji 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 4th 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.

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 Timmaiamma after his death. Timmaiamma lived with Durgabai and Chintaman Deshmukh. Durgabai took care of her and also organised vocational training for Timmaiamma.

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 9th 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.

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 Veerapandiyaapuram (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



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.

Madurai A Vaidynatha Iyer

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (April 2023)

A Vaidyanatha Iyer also popularly known as Madurai Vaidyanatha Iyer was a freedom fighter and a social activist. During 1939 he led the temple entry movement for Dalits in the then Madras Presidency. A staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi, he actively participated in Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920-22, Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha in 1930 and Quit India Movement in 1942 and was a pillar of support to freedom movement against the British.



**AV IYER SPINNING WITH THAKLI
IN HAND**

Vaidyanatha Iyer was born to Sri Arunachalam Iyer and Smt. Lakshmi Ammal on 16 May 1890. He was the second child to them. Arunachalam Iyer worked in Pudukkottai Maharaja's School as Mathematics teacher. Vaidyanatha Iyer completed his SSLC in Madurai Sethupathy High School during 1909 and did his FA in Madura College. He was the recipient of the prestigious Neelakanda Shastri Gold Medal and the Fisher Gold Medal by the institution. Vaidyanatha Iyer after his FA examinations, married Akilandam at the age of 18.

During 1914 he completed his B.A. degree from Madras Presidency College. After completing his B.A. degree, he worked as a teacher for one year each at Bishop Heber Higher Secondary School in Trichy and at Masoolipattinam Hindu

Higher Secondary School. He then got qualified himself as an Advocate and enrolled in the Bar. Even from his early childhood days Vaidyanatha Iyer had been inspired by the speeches of the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das etc. While he was studying in Presidency College, Madras, he attended a public meeting addressed by Bipin Chandra Pal at the Madras Beach. The Principal of the College who happened to be British got upset and Vaidyanatha Iyer was made to stand on the bench from morning to evening as punishment. But that did not deter him from involving later in the freedom movement.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Madurai once in 1919. During his second visit in 1921 Mahatma Gandhi draped a small dhoti around his waist to symbolically identify himself with the local farmers. He also addressed a public meeting which triggered inspiration amongst many youngsters and in later years many of them became leaders and social reformers. Vaidyanatha Iyer was one among them who went on to become a great leader and a social reformer.

In 1920, when Gandhiji announced the Non-Cooperation Movement, Vaidyanatha Iyer wanted to leave his lucrative practice as a lawyer and join the Indian National Congress as a full-time worker. However as per the advice of Chittaranjan Das and Mahatma Gandhi, who were touring Madurai at that time, Vaidyanatha Iyer continued his legal profession as advocate and simultaneously work for the Indian National Congress to inspire the youth and entice more volunteers to join the party. Thus he accepted the twin challenges of practicing as an advocate as well as a political and social activist.

Gandhiji sequel to the Non-Cooperation movement desired that the volunteers to take part in activities like Khadi promotion, Hindu-Muslim unity, empowerment of Dalits and the abolishing of liquor sale to public. He and his volunteers

promoted Khadi cloth and making handspun Khadi cloth in Madurai and the villages nearby. Vaidyanatha Iyer also introduced the hand-spinning wheel for making handspun Khadi cloth. He visited many nearby villages and propagated the importance of Khadi thereby boosting its production and sales. Consequentially Madurai District was ranked number one in the entire Madras Presidency and bagged the prestigious Silver Hand-Spinning Wheel.

In December 1929, the talks between Mahatma Gandhi and the British Government failed. Hence Gandhiji decided to conduct the Salt March from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi. Rajaji and Iyer met in Madurai regarding implementation of Salt March in South India and it was decided that the Salt March would start from Tiruchirappalli and end at Vedaranyam where the preparation of salt would take place. Gandhiji was arrested by the British government at the end of Dandi March and imprisoned for six years. Despite that the Salt March in South India commenced on 13 April 1930 at Trichy and ended after 15 days at Vedaranyam. Rajaji, who made salt there was arrested and put in jail. Vaidyanatha Iyer as suggested by Rajaji, did not participate in the procession. After Rajaji's arrest, Vaidyanatha Iyer and other leaders continued the Salt March ignoring the ban orders. The police suddenly stormed the place to disperse the crowd when Vaidyanatha Iyer was addressing a public meeting. In the process they attacked Vaidyanatha Iyer and dragged him for a furlong. He and the others who were participating in the meeting were arrested and imprisoned in Trichi jail. They were released only after Gandhi-Irwin Pact which was signed in 1931.

Gandhiji started the civil disobedience movement in 1932. Vaidyanatha Iyer campaigned against liquor and boycott of foreign made goods in Madurai. He met the expenses incurred for these campaigns out of his personal savings. When Gandhiji was arrested, a public meeting was organized in Madurai. The police entered the meeting and read Section 144

which was condemned by Vaidyanatha Iyer. He was arrested for resisting the act of the police. The court ordered his imprisonment for one year and a fine of Rs. 500. He was lodged in Vellore jail. To recover the fine amount the police decided to auction his car but none from the public came to buy the car. It demonstrated the love, respect and regard they had for Vaidyanatha Iyer. At that time Congress Committee also did not have adequate funds to continue the agitation. Coming to know that the Congress Committee of Madurai did not have enough funds to continue the civil disobedience movement, Vaidyanatha Iyer, before leaving for Vellore jail, planned through one of his confidants to dispose of some of his family jewels to raise money for the Congress Committee of Madurai. The jewels were pawned for Rs 7000/- instead of being sold and were later redeemed with Vaidyanatha Iyer's savings.

In 1940 when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested and jailed in Kashmir, the people of Madurai protested and closed their shops. At that time Hindus and Muslims gathered with weapons at the junction of South Masi Street and West Masi Street and the situation became tense. Coming to know of this Vaidyanatha Iyer went to the spot and pleaded with both sides to calm down by falling on the ground with folded hands. The angry crowd calmed down and dispersed without causing any untoward incident. Thus what could have been a major clash was averted on time by Vaidyanatha Iyer. His contribution towards Hindu-Muslim unity was extraordinary to say the least.

In 1940, during the Congress Committee meeting held at Pune, Gandhiji called for individuals to take part in Satyagraha. Iyer selected the volunteers for the Satyagraha and led them in the Madurai. Akilandam Ammal, wife of Iyer, was also a volunteer. She too was arrested and imprisoned for three months in Vellore Jail. On 8th August 1942, Gandhiji announced the 'Quit India' Movement. The British Government

got annoyed and enraged. It jailed Gandhiji and several other Congress leaders. Curfew was also imposed all over India. Coming to know of Gandhiji's arrest, Vaidyanatha Iyer organized a public meeting at Thilakar Ground in Madurai by breaking the curfew. Police lathi-charged and fired at the people who attended the meeting. Several people lost their lives while many were injured. Vaidyanatha Iyer was arrested for instigating people and breaking the curfew and was sent to the Alipore Jail. He was in jail when his eldest son passed away. The news reached him quite late. He had to come out on parole and perform the last rites for his eldest son. Vaidyanatha Iyer also got his elder daughter Sulochana married while he was in parole. Vaidyanatha Iyer was released from Alipore Jail after six months. He was rearrested at the entrance of the jail and taken to Thanjavur Jail and then moved to Vellore Jail. As part of a general amnesty in 1945 he was set free from jail and he continued his practice as an advocate.

Vaidyanatha Iyer continuously emphasized and worked for cooperation between Hindus and Muslims in Madurai district. He too, like Mahatma Gandhi, did not like the division of India and Pakistan. While India attained independence on 15th August 1947 the whole country celebrated the occasion, the joy of leaders like Gandhiji and Vaidyanatha Iyer was tinged with sorrow at the India-Pakistan Partition.

While spreading the Khadi movement, Vaidyanatha Iyer also spread education and involved himself to abolish untouchability in Madurai and its neighboring villages. Iyer fought for the cause even before the Harijan Sevak Sangh and other such social reformist organizations were formed. He along with other prominent personalities like M.N.R. Subburaman, Dr. G. Ramachandran, Somasundara Bharathy, Manakkal Pattabirama Iyer, Cholavandan Chinnasamy Pillai and Mattaparai Venkatrama Iyer worked hard for the temple entry movement in Madurai. The members of the Meenakshi

Amman Temple Trust and its Chairman R.S. Naidu also supported this reform.

On July 8, 1939, Vaidyanatha Iyer entered Meenakshi Amman temple with a group of Dalits and members of other castes. At the entrance to the temple, they were honoured by R. S. Naidu, who had made proper arrangements for them to worship the main deity of the temple. Vaidyanatha Iyer then announced that temple entry for Dalits was successful. Temple entry movement was one of the great reforms which was instrumental in abolishing untouchability. His contribution towards this is highly laudable as he fought against several odds to achieve this feat. Vaidyanatha Iyer breathed his last on February 23, 1955. A biography of Vaidyanatha Iyer titled "Harjana Thanthai Amarar Vaidyanatha Iyerin Vazhkai Varalaaru" (Biography of the Immortal Vaidyanatha Iyer, Father to all Harijans) was authored by Professor P. S. Chandrababu in 1991.

Every year on Iyer's death anniversary people pay respect to him by garlanding his statue. On that day, respects are paid to his memorial at the Chennai Thakkar Baba Vidyalaya School and the Madurai 'Sevalayam' which was started by Vaidyanatha Iyer in 1932 to serve the Harijans. A postage stamp was issued in his memory by the Government of India on 9th December 1999. The inspiring speeches made by Iyer in the Madras Legislative Assembly were compiled by Professor P. S. Chandrababu and released as a book titled "Voice of a Great Soul" by Gandhi Memorial Museum, Madurai.

Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Dec 2022)

The first half of the Nineteenth Century witnessed two significant developments in Indian history. While the British were rapidly expanding colonialism, the period also witnessed fierce resistance and defiance by different strata of Indian society. The year 1857 is regarded as the earliest large-scale revolt against the British. There were also many uprisings that broke out locally throughout India. And one of them was the Polygar Wars down South of India that occurred between March 1799 to July 1805. This



was one of the severest revolts faced by the British. It is very interesting to note that contrary to the most historians' claims, the British did not have an easy challenge as the Polygar Wars were the most serious and bloodiest challenge to their dominance. During the 6-year period the British had to face stiff resistance and they had to taste defeat in many battles. All the main participants in the Polygar Wars strongly challenged and overcame the British. However, the British took some cunning and treachery to capture and execute these brave fighters.

Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy belonged to the clan of Polygars who offered stiff resistance to the British East India Company and their rule. The Polygars were basically small-time lords. They became prominent during the rule of the Vijayanagar Empire. They were known for their combat capabilities and had private armies which fought during various battles. The Polygars were well trained and had experience in artillery. Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy was born to farmer Telugu

Palegaadu Malla Reddy and Seethamma in Rupanagudi village on 24th November 1806. He belonged to the Motati clan which is a subsect of Reddys in Andhra Pradesh. Malla Reddy was related to the Jagirdar family of Uyyalawada in Koilakuntla (Kurnool District) by his marriage with two daughters of the Palegar of Nossam. He had three sons and Narasimha was the youngest and only son of Seethamma, the younger daughter of the Palegar of Nossam. Narasimha Reddy and his trusted friend and Commander-in-chief Vadde Obanna fought for the freedom against British rule in 1847 along with 5,000 peasants who revolted against the British East India Company in Nandyal district.

Nizam ceded the Rayalaseema region to the British as a part of their agreement and the Polygars came under the British rule. Since the Polygars had large estates and wealth the British abolished the Polygar system and acquired them. In lieu of the annexing of the estates the Polygars were given some grants and pension in some cases. One of the Polygars was in Uyyalawada in the Kurnool district. Malla Reddy was the adopted son of Nosam zamindar Chenchumalla Jayarami Reddy. On the abolition of the Polygar system a pension of Rs. Eleven was granted to Malla Reddy but later on discontinued by the British since Malla Reddy was the adopted son of Nosam zamindar Chenchumalla Jayarami Reddy. This is the triggering point that made Narasimha Reddy furious and he decided to revolt against the British. Somewhere around the same time some of his relatives were facing certain proposals by the British for reducing their rights on the lands. Further in 1846, the British grabbed the land rights held by the villagers who had died in the villages of Koilakuntla, Goodladurty and Nossam. Encouraged by the discontent and dissent of the people Narasimha Reddy became the leader of the revolt against the British. Narasimha Reddy was also joined by other Polygars whose lands and assets were seized by the British. The Zamindars of Wanaparthi, Munagala, Penugonda, and the

Boya, Chenchu tribes in the Nallamalla Hills supported him by joining in his uprising against the British.

Narasimha Reddy along with a strong force of Boyas first attacked the Koilakuntla treasury on July 10, 1846. The Tahsildar was killed and beheaded. The Treasurer was also killed and the treasury was razed to the ground. The British then surprised by the attack, cracked down hard. They captured Narasimha Reddy's close associates Gosai Venkana and Obanna. The British then sent an army under Captain Knott and Captain Watson to capture Narasimha Reddy but failed to do so. Narasimha Reddy defeated the British army forcing Captain Knott and Captain Watson to withdraw from the scene. Narasimha Reddy once again attacked the British forces in the Nallamalla forests at Giddalur and forced them to withdraw. He kept the British on tenterhooks with a series of guerrilla attacks and hence they failed to capture him.

The British then captured and imprisoned Narasimha Reddy's family at Kadapa. When Narasimha Reddy came there to free his family, the Collector of Kadapa surrounded the area with his army. Narasimha Reddy's cook was bribed to mix toddy in his food to make him intoxicated and his gun was also disabled. Narasimha Reddy was captured on October 6, 1846, and was brought to Koilakuntla, along with several of his associates. A prolonged trial was held accusing Narasimha Reddy of revolting against the British. He was also charged with looting and murder. After the completion of the trial, he was found guilty and the death penalty was awarded. Narasimha Reddy was hanged in public on February 22, 1847, at 7 a.m, at Jurreti, Koilakuntla, Kurnool district. Later his head was displayed at the Koilakuntla fort as a warning to the general public revolting against the British.

Renati Chandrula Smaraka Samithi was formed to celebrate and preserve the memory of Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy

and the renowned philanthropist Budda Vengal Reddy both of whom belonged to Uyyalawada village. The Committee published a book titled *Renati Surya Chandrulu (The Sun and Moon of Renadu)* in Telugu and in English during the year 2015 which contains excerpts from research papers by historians. Kurnool Airport at Orvakal has been named Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy Airport in 2015. A movie based on Narasimha Reddy's life 'Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy' starring Chiranjeevi and directed by Surender Reddy was released on 2 October 2019. Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy is also known as Koilakuntla Narsimha Reddy. After his execution on 22 February 1847, incidentally ten years before the historic First War of Independence, his head was hung on a scaffold in the ort of Nossam where it remained till 1877. The heroic and patriotic attempt of Koilakuntla Narsimha Reddy inspired millions of people in the region. He is hailed as the hero who led the revolt in Andhra Pradesh against British rule.

Accamma Cherian

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Feb 2023)



Accamma Cherian was a freedom fighter from Kerala who protested against the ban on Travancore State Congress by Dewan of Travancore. *"I am the leader; shoot me first before you kill others"*. These were the exact words of Accamma Cherian who led a mass rally to the palace of Maharaja Chithira Thirunal from Thamapanoor to the Kowdiar. The rally was focused to get the ban on the State Congress lifted. Mahatma Gandhi proclaimed her as the

Jhansi Rani of Travancore for the courage exhibited by her. She is one among many unsung India's freedom fighters whose names have sunk into anonymity over the years. Kandathil Sebastian, a social scientist wrote "For more than 15 years she was probably the toughest woman in public politics in Travancore and was at the forefront of the momentous people's struggle in Travancore in the pre-independence era," Accamma was born to Thomman Cherian and Annamma Karippaparambil on 14 February 1909 in a Nasrani family (Karippaparambil) at Kanjirapally, Travancore. She was their second daughter. She had her schooling at the Government Girls High School, Kanjirapally and later at St. Joseph's High School, Changanacherry. She completed her BA in History from St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam. During 1931 she took up teaching at St. Mary's English Medium School, Edakkara and she later became the Headmistress of the school and worked for six years.

Accamma joined the *Travancore State Congress* which was formed in February 1938. At that time the people of

Travancore were pressing for a responsible government and started the agitation. The Dewan of Travancore decided to suppress the agitation since he was taking orders from the Maharaja and on 26 August 1938, the State Congress was banned by using his discretionary powers. This ban triggered to a civil disobedience movement which was the first of its kind in Kerala. The top Congress leaders like Pattom Thanu Pillai were jailed. This led to alter their course of agitation. The President of the State Congress was given powers to choose a successor and simultaneously the working committee was dissolved. All the eleven Presidents of the State Congress were arrested one by one and the movement was about to collapse. However, fortunately Kuttanad Ramakrishna Pillai, the eleventh president due to his foresight before his arrest nominated Accamma Cherian as his successor. Thereafter a Strikers' Union emerged and the Congress found their new leader in this bold and a dare devil woman. Accamma who was only 29 years at the time and she writes in her autobiography thus exhibiting her courage and leadership.

"I was aware of the seriousness of the assignment and knew what the consequences could be, yet I volunteered to do the job."

Accamma Cherian's Autobiography – Jeevitham Oru Samaram (Life Is A Struggle)

The Congress Party under the leadership of Accamma Cherian gathered local youth from every nook and corner of Thiruvithamkur from Vadakkan Paravur to Kanyakumari. The volunteers gathered at Thampanoor in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday October 23 to disrupt the birthday celebrations of the Maharaja. From the dawn, the streets were filled with a sea of people proudly donning white *khadi dress* and Gandhi caps. The air was filled with slogans like '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*', '*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*' and '*State Congress Ki Jai*'. The

railway station grounds at Thampanoor was transformed into an ocean of protesters shouting slogans against the dictatorial rule of the Maharaja. E.M. Kovoov described the historical protest as follows:



"Not hundreds but tens of thousands wearing white Khaddar Jubbahs and still whiter Gandhi caps were surging forward in massive waves... Accamma Cherian was leading that white sea, standing in an open jeep, dressed in khaddar and a Gandhi cap, like Goddess Durga crushing beneath her feet evil and injustice; her hair played in the wind like black flags hoisted against autocracy."

The protestors under the leadership of Accamma then proceeded towards the Royal Palace to present the people's memorandum to the King. The protest continued despite various hurdles that it had to encounter and ultimately until the government yielded to release its prisoners and lift the long standing ban on State Congress. It was one of the most momentous people's struggles staged in Travancore during

the pre-independence era. Historians say that this protest is a pivotal moment in the freedom struggle in the state of Travancore (now Kerala).

In October 1938, Accamma was entrusted by the State Congress to organize the *Desasevika Sangh* (Female Volunteer Corps). She travelled incessantly to the nook and corner of the country and encouraged the women to join as members and participate effectively in the *Desasevika Sangh*. Her relentless involvement and work led to a surge a large number of women volunteers in the local bodies. By then Accamma's sister Rosamma Punnoose, and her brother KC Varkey had also joined the freedom struggle.

On 24 December 1939, Accamma participated in the annual conference organized by the Travancore State Congress. Consequently she and her sister Rosamma Punnoose were jailed and were sentenced to a year's imprisonment. In the prison she was tortured, harassed and verbally abused. After her release from prison, she engaged herself as a full-time party worker and later ultimately became the President of Travancore State Congress. In her first presidential address, she welcomed the Quit India Resolution passed at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1942. Accamma encountered a series of arrests for violating ban orders and staging protests but it did not deter her from her mission. Accamma was duly elected without any opposition to the Travancore Legislative Assembly from Kanjirapally in 1947. She married V.V. Varkey, a freedom fighter and a member of Travancore Cochin Legislative Assembly during 1952 and they had one son George V. Varkey who later became an engineer. She quit active politics in 1967. She served as a Member of the Freedom Fighter's Pension Advisory Board for some time. Accamma died on 05th May, 1982 at Thiruvananthapuram. In her autobiography, she summed up her life when she wrote.....



"Shakespeare has said that the world is a stage and that all the men and women merely players; but to me, this life is a long protest – protest against conservatism, meaningless rituals, societal injustice, gender discrimination, against anything that is dishonest, unjust...when I see anything like this, I turn blind, I even forget who I am fighting..."

A statue built in Accamma Cherian's memory stands in a park named after her in Thiruvananthapuram. A documentary on the life of

Accamma Cherian was made by Sreebala K. Menon the Sahithya Academy winner.

Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna (15 August 1798 – 26 January 1831)

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Aug 2023)

"I may die now but I will soon take birth again and come back to fight for my kingdom and the people until it is free from the clutches of the British."

These were the famous words of Sangolli Rayanna (15 August 1798–26 January 1831), more popularly known as Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna, the legendary Indian freedom fighter from Karnataka who rattled the East India Company and the British. The freedom struggle for India's independence had been a long-drawn fight against the British. The historians who scripted the Indian freedom struggle highlighted largely the non-violent movement but sadly camouflaged the brave acts of various freedom fighters which included the freedom fighters from Kashmir to Kanyakumari who took upon themselves armed struggles, fought relentlessly and made freedom a reality at a later date.



Many such revolutionaries were not recognized and remain unsung. One such great freedom fighter was Sangolli Rayanna, a freedom fighter and revolutionary from Karnataka, who took to armed struggle and fought valiantly against the East India Company and the British. He had not been adequately recognized by the historians who scripted the Indian freedom struggle or by the textbook writers and didn't get what he deserved. Interestingly, the readers may note Sangolli Rayanna was one of the foremost Indian

freedom fighters who adopted guerilla warfare against the East India Company and the British.

Rayanna was the contemporary of the great freedom fighter Rani Chennamma. Rani Chennamma married King Somashekara Nayaka in 1667 CE. After the death of Somashekara Nayaka in 1677, Chennamma took over the administration and efficiently ruled Kittur, winning the admiration of her people. Rani Chennamma had an adopted son by the name of Shivalingappa. Chennamma wanted to install her adopted son Shivalingappa to succeed Somashekara Nayaka after his death. The East India Company had other plans. They wanted to annex the kingdom of Kittur following their "Doctrine of Lapse". According to the "Doctrine of Lapse", a draconian law, a kingdom with no heir will automatically fall under the East India Company and the adopted son not allowed to succeed the King.

Rayanna fought with the East India Company and the British on behalf of Chennamma. Sangolli Rayanna efficiently trained the army and was always ready to take on the British soldiers. Sangolli Rayanna fought valiantly but they lost the war, and Chennamma was captured. Rayanna went into hiding, taking Shivalingappa safely along with him to fight for his queen and his motherland.

Sangolli Rayanna participated in the rebellion of 1824 and was arrested by the British and was later released. He continued his fight the British and wanted to install the adopted son Shivalingappa to succeed Chennamma as the ruler of Kittur. He gathered able-bodied local people and started a guerilla type of war against the British. He and his army moved from place to place and burnt Government offices. They waylaid British troops and plundered treasuries. Most of his land was reclaimed. Sangolli Rayanna was one of the first and foremost freedom fighters who used guerilla warfare tactics against the British. The British army could not defeat him despite their huge army. Hence the British adopted treachery by

befriending his uncle Lakshmanraya and with his help captured Rayanna in April 1830 and sentenced him to death. Shivalingappa, the adopted son who was to succeed Chennamma was also arrested by the British. Rayanna was ably assisted throughout his fight against the British by Gajaveera, a Siddhi warrior in 1829–30. Sangolli Rayanna and Gajaveera together caused chaos and destruction in any event that was conducted by the British or on their behalf. The British executed Rayanna by hanging him from a Banyan tree near Nandagad, on 26 January 1831 at the young age of 33. He was buried near Nandagad, the place where he was hanged.

Bichugatti Channabasappa, a close associate and friend of Rayanna, planted a banyan sapling on his grave. Today the tree is fully grown and stands majestically to this date. An Ashoka Pillar was also installed near the tree and a small temple in the name of Sangolli Rayanna was constructed. At Sangolli village, stands a statue of Rayanna flanked by two wooden weights used for bodybuilding. The two wooden weights are the original ones that were used by Rayanna for bodybuilding. A community hall was built in memory of Rayanna at Sangolli, the place where Rayanna was hanged by the British army.

Many heroic folklore verses were composed in North Karnataka and several such songs are sung about Kittur Chennamma, Sangolli Rayanna and other figures of pre-independence who hailed from Karnataka. A life-size bronze statue of Sangolli Rayanna, riding a horse with an open sword in his right hand, was installed near Bengaluru City Railway station. In 2015, the main railway station of Bengaluru City was renamed "Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station". A Kannada film "Kranthiveera Sangolli Rayanna" starring Darshan, Jaya Prada and Nikita Thukral was directed by Naganna in 2012 based on his life history.

Sangolli Rayanna became an inspiration to the next generation of freedom fighters. He was respected for his love towards his kingdom and faithfulness towards his queen Rani Chennamma. Even to this day, the women in the Sangolli village follow a tradition where they tie small cradles to the banyan tree planted in his memory with a wish to have a son as brave and committed a freedom fighter as Rayanna. In the present days when freedom fighters are largely forgotten, we as citizens of India should remember the freedom fighters who triggered the freedom movement in 1800 and inspired the later leaders to struggle and obtain freedom from the British. Though their efforts in obtaining freedom from the British did not fructify it certainly built a strong foundation for the leaders of the later generations to fight for freedom and gain Independence.

Incidentally, it may be noted that he was born on Independence Day and died on Republic Day – a great coincidence indeed.

JAI HIND

Vanchinathan

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (May 2024)



The Indian independence struggle is one of the most remarkable movements in world history, characterized by immense bravery and sacrifice from people across all walks of life. This prolonged struggle saw the participation of countless individuals who, driven by an unyielding desire for freedom, endured severe repression by the British authorities. While many freedom fighters gained widespread recognition, numerous others who contributed significantly to the

cause remain relatively unknown. One such unsung hero is Vanchinathan, an Indian independence activist from Tamil Nadu whose bold actions left a lasting impact on the revolutionary movement in South India.

Vanchinathan, born Shankaran in 1886 to Raghupathy Iyer and Rukmani in Sengottai, Travancore, British India (present-day Tamil Nadu), grew up in a poor Hindu family. His early life was marked by humble beginnings and a strong sense of patriotism, instilled by the socio-political environment of the time. After completing his schooling in Sengottai and obtaining a bachelor's degree, Vanchinathan began his career as a temple accountant before securing a government position in the Travancore forest department. He married Ponnamma, and the couple had a daughter who, unfortunately, died in infancy, adding a layer of personal tragedy to his life.

Vanchinathan's journey into the independence movement was influenced by the prevailing anti-colonial sentiments and his association with prominent activists. He was trained in arms by Varahaneri Venkatesa Subrahmanya Iyer, a revolutionary who advocated violent resistance against British rule. This training was crucial in shaping Vanchinathan's approach towards the freedom struggle, steering him towards revolutionary activities. His involvement deepened when he came into contact with Nilakanta Brahmachari, a close associate of the famed poet and nationalist Subramania Bharati, who worked as a sub-editor for the nationalist newspaper "India."

Brahmachari, after the Tirunelveli riots of 1908, founded the Bharatha Matha Sangam, a revolutionary organization aimed at recruiting and training young patriots for the struggle against British rule. Vanchinathan was introduced to Brahmachari by his brother-in-law Shankara Krishna Iyer, a member of the Sangam. This connection further solidified Vanchinathan's commitment to the cause and integrated him into a network of like-minded revolutionaries dedicated to India's independence.

Robert Ashe, the district collector of Tirunelveli, became a prime target for Vanchinathan and his compatriots due to his oppressive policies against Indian nationalists. Ashe played a significant role in suppressing the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, founded by the Indian nationalist V. O. Chidambaram Pillai. The company, which aimed to challenge British shipping dominance, was supported by Indian merchants and provided employment to many Indian workers. Ashe's actions against the company, including the arrest and conviction of Chidambaram and fellow activist Subramaniya Siva on charges of sedition, fueled resentment among Indian nationalists. Additionally, Ashe's order for violent repression during the Tirunelveli riots of 1908 and his discriminatory policies further inflamed anti-British sentiments.

The revolutionary factions decided that Ashe's assassination would serve as a potent symbol of resistance against British oppression. At the age of 25, Vanchinathan was chosen to carry out this daring mission. He meticulously planned the assassination, closely monitoring Ashe's activities and movements. On June 17, 1911, Ashe and his wife were traveling from Tirunelveli to Madras, intending to catch the Boat Mail Express from Ceylon. Unbeknownst to them, Vanchinathan and fellow activist Madasamy had boarded the same train at Tirunelveli.

When the train reached Maniyachchi railway station at 10:35 am, Vanchinathan and Madasamy made their move towards the first-class compartment where Ashe was seated. Vanchinathan pulled out a pistol concealed in his coat and shot Ashe at point-blank range, killing him instantly. The pistol used was a Browning semi-automatic, reportedly procured by the prominent Indian



revolutionary Bhikaji Cama from Paris. After the assassination, Vanchinathan hid in the train's lavatory and took his own life to evade arrest. In his pocket, the police found a letter in which he accused the British of destroying Sanatana Dharma and declared that he had acted independently to drive the British out of India.

The assassination of Robert Ashe was a significant event in the Indian independence movement, particularly in South India. It marked a shift towards more radical and revolutionary

methods of resistance, contrasting with the non-violent approach advocated by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. The incident galvanized other revolutionaries and underscored the growing discontent and willingness to use force among sections of the Indian populace.

Despite the profound impact of his actions, Vanchinathan did not receive widespread recognition during his time, and his contributions faded from mainstream historical narratives. However, his legacy has been preserved in various ways. The railway station where Ashe was assassinated was renamed Vanchi Maniyachchi Junction Railway Station in his honor. In 2010, the Government of Tamil Nadu announced plans to build a memorial at Vanchinathan's birthplace in Sengottai, which was inaugurated in 2013. Additionally, many streets and localities in Tamil Nadu have been named after him, serving as enduring reminders of his sacrifice.

The significance of Vanchinathan's actions lies not only in the assassination itself but also in what it represented: a profound commitment to the cause of independence and a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. His story is a poignant reminder of the diverse methods and the breadth of participation in the Indian independence movement, encompassing a wide spectrum from non-violent protests to armed rebellion.

Vanchinathan's life and legacy highlight the complexities of the freedom struggle, where various ideologies and approaches coexisted and sometimes clashed. The revolutionary path he chose was fraught with danger and demanded immense courage, reflecting the desperation and determination of those who saw no other means to achieve their goal of independence. His actions, while controversial, underscore the lengths to which individuals were prepared to go to free their country from colonial rule.

The Indian independence movement was not a monolithic entity but a tapestry of numerous efforts, each contributing in



its own way to the ultimate goal of freedom. Figures like Vanchinathan, though not as celebrated as some of their contemporaries, played crucial roles in this struggle. Their stories deserve to be remembered and honored, for they embody the spirit of sacrifice and resistance that defined India's fight for independence.

In conclusion, Vanchinathan's life and actions offer a compelling narrative of courage and sacrifice in the Indian independence movement. His assassination of Robert Ashe was a bold and pivotal act that underscored the revolutionary fervor present in South India. Although he did not live to see India's independence, Vanchinathan's legacy continues to inspire and remind us of the many unsung heroes who contributed to the nation's freedom. His story is a testament to the multifaceted nature of the independence struggle and the indomitable spirit of those who fought for India's liberation without expecting any encomiums.

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 was fascinated by their culture and firmly believed that the British rule had done a lot of good to India and the Indians. On the contrary 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 Dadabhoy 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 Dhillon 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."

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.

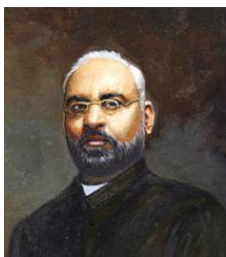
Shyamji Krishna Varma

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 Verma 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.

Tantia Tope- A Hero of 1857 Revolt

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Oct 2022)



Tantia Tope is one of the outstanding rebel generals during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 who left an indelible mark in the Indian History. Despite no military training he fought the battles with valour, leadership qualities and established himself as a great leader and a freedom fighter. Tantia Tope is considered as one of the best and a prudent rebel general during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Tantia Tope did not wake up to the reality of the British rule on the eve of 1857 but was a product of a strong anti-British tradition that continued even after the fall of the Marathas in 1818. Tantia got the title Tope which meant Commanding Officer. He was a follower of Nana Saheb of Bithur.

It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that the 1857 revolt came to be interpreted as a "planned war of national independence", by V.D. Savarkar in his book "The Indian War of Independence, 1857". Savarkar called the revolt the first war of Indian independence. He said it was inspired by the lofty ideal of self-rule by Indians through a nationalist upsurge. Dr S.N. Sen in his book titled "Eighteen Fifty-Seven" considers the revolt as having begun as a fight for religion but ending as a war of independence. The rebellion of 1857 marked a significant turning point in the history of India and this led to far-reaching changes in the system of administration and the policies of the British government. Tantia Tope's nimble marches, his flexible war strategies and his undiminished spirit in the face of adversity are often compared to those of Shivaji.

Tantia was born to Ramachandra and Rukmadevi in 1814 in Yeola near Nasik. He belonged to the Maratha Vasishta Brahmin family. Growing up under the guidance of his father who was a scholar of Sanskrit, Tantia was well versed with India's polity. His passion for protecting India's freedom, that he demonstrated during his later years, was an inspiration from his early influences. His father Ramachandra was a prominent noble at the court of exiled Peshwa Baji Rao II in Bithoor. Tantia Tope became a close friend of Peshwa's adopted son, Nana Pant and popularly known as Nana Saheb. His other very important friends were Rao Saheb and Rani Lakshmi Bai. 'Tantia' was the nickname given to him since childhood and it means 'General' and 'Tope' was a title which was given to him later which means 'Commanding Officer.'

Tantia Tope's **role in the Revolt of 1857 is admirable.** Tantia Tope rebelled against the British when Nana Saheb was deprived of his father's pension because he was not a natural born child of Peshwa Baji Rao II. Nana Saheb assumed the position of rebel leader during the Cawnpore (presently Kanpur) rebellion and later on 25 June 1857 after the surrender of the British forces became the Peshwa. Tantia Tope was his Commander in Chief. However, General Havelock defeated Nana Saheb and recaptured Cawnpore in mid-July 1857. But in late November 1857, Tantia Tope gathered an army predominantly from the Gwalior contingent and took back Cawnpore from General Charles Ash Windham. However, in December the same year, he was defeated by Sir Colin Campbell and had to retreat to Kalpi.

Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi was under attack from the British forces led by Sir Hugh Rose in March 1858 and Tantia Tope came to her rescue and helped her to escape and welcomed her to Kalpi. When Kalpi was conquered by the British, the trio - Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tantia and Rao Saheb - moved to Gwalior. Tantia Tope enticed the soldiers of Gwalior to join the movement to attack the British. The Gwalior Fort was taken

over declaring as Hindavi Swaraj. Nana Saheb was announced as their Peshwa. In a subsequent battle with the British under General Rose on June 17, 1858 Rani Lakshmi Bai became a martyr and the rest escaped for the Rajputana.

After the defeat of Gwalior, Tantia Tope planned the strategy of guerrilla warfare over an extensive expansive area of the central part of India consisting of Malwa, Bundelkhand, Rajputana and Khandesh. The guerrilla warfare caused a great impediment to the British and were not able to counter the same.

Tantia Tope wanted to cross the Narmada River to reach down south and garner popular support from the rulers and people for Peshwa, which the British did not want to happen. The British army under the command of Col Holmes, General Roberts and General Michel attacked him at numerous places, but each time he skillfully got away from their clutches. In many regions Tantia Tope convinced minor rulers to back the rebellion and at other places, he defeated and charged them fines. Due to this he was able to gather and sustain the army. The British tried to chase him for around 2800 miles across the hills, valleys and forest but such was his skill that they failed to capture him.

The British finally captured Tantia Tope as Raja of Narwar, Man Singh in exchange of protection for himself and his family handed over Tantia Tope. Tantia Tope was tried in a military court by the British but he vehemently denied any role in British civilian massacres. He challenged the sedition charges boldly declaring that his master was only Nana Saheb and not the British. The British claim that Tantia Tope was executed at Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh on 18th April 1859 witnessed by thousands of people.

The descendants of Tantia Tope denied that he was hanged. In a book titled, 'Tantia Tope's Operation Red Lotus' authored

by Parag Tope claimed that Tantia Tope died in January 1859 fighting against the British in a battle in Chhipa Barod and that he was not hanged. It is further mentioned in the book that the person who was hanged was one of the freedom fighters who continued to fight till April 1859 by disguising as Tantia Tope.



Nana Rao Park, Kanpur honoured eminent personalities of India's struggle for freedom. The park houses a statue of Tantia Tope along with

Nana Saheb and Rani Lakshmi Bai. Another statue of Tantia Tope stands at his hometown in Yeola in Nasik District, Maharashtra. Mahesh Sharma In 2016, the then Union Minister for Culture released a commemorative coin of Rs 200 denomination and a coin of Rs 10, in Tantia Tope's honour.

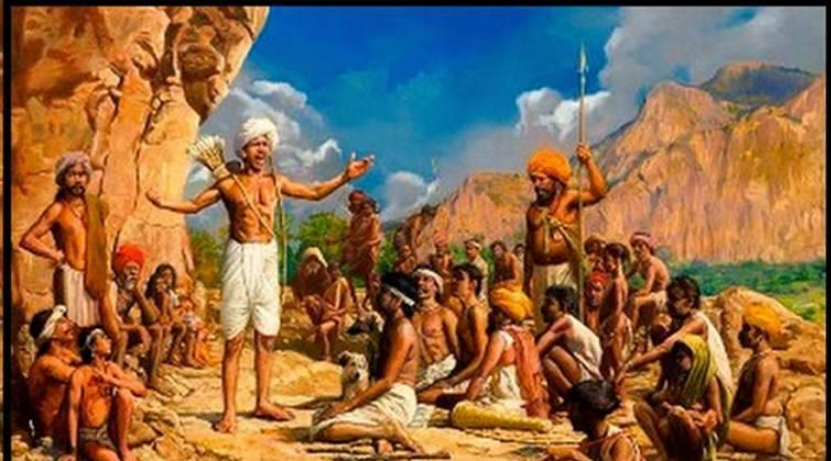


Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort in New Delhi on the occasion of the country's 76th Independence Day also specifically recalled the yeoman service made by Tantia Tope in his fight against the British for the independence of India.

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 9th 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.

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***

Tilka Manjhi

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Nov 2022)



Indian civilization is one of the oldest living civilisation and is estimated to be about 7000 years old. The real Indian history had been camouflaged with distorted facts by some western historians. The Manjhi Revolt against the British which was camouflaged is one such classic case in the Indian history. Tilka Manjhi was a valiant freedom fighter from Bihar. He belonged to the tribal community. He was the first to proclaim an open revolt against the British and incessantly fought for freedom from 1771 until 1784. He revolted against the British rule with bows and arrows way before Mangal Pandey took up arms against the British. He had fought the battle with courage, strong conviction and resisted the British rule for the atrocities and brutality committed by them. He was ultimately captured and was hanged in 1785 by the British. The fight

against the British was a long-drawn affair and Tilka Manjhi's fight against the British was the precursor to the tribal uprising followed by Bhumij Revolt (1798), the Chero Uprising (1810), the Munda Uprising (1819-1820), the Kol Rebellion (1833), the Second Bhumij Revolt (1834) and of the Santhal Hool (1855).

Tilka Majhi was born in a Santhal family on 11th February 1750 in a small village called Tilakpur in Sultanganj, Bihar. His father's name was Sundara Murmu. Since childhood Tilka lived in the forest and hunted wild animals for a living. His favourite activities were workouts, wrestling, climbing on the trees, walking in the valleys, playing with wild animals, roaming in wild forests, river fronts etc. Having been in the forest since childhood days amongst the wildlife made him brave and fearless. His weapons were bows and arrows.

Tilka since his childhood days witnessed the tyranny and the oppression of the British unleashed on the tribals and their family. The British forcefully grabbed their rights of the cultivation and the wild trees etc. The tribal people including the women, children and old people were mercilessly tortured. The mountains which were inhabited by the landlords kept the British in good books in return for the money. All these factors culminated and provoked Tilka to rebel against the British. The tribals under the leadership of Tilka were headed towards the forest areas of Bhagalpur and Sultanganj. During sometime around 1770, the Santhal Pargana was dying due to severe drought. The British instead of providing assistance like food and other relief material to the people exploited them mercilessly. This was the triggering point for the revolt of Tilka.

Tilka and the tribals led by him were in constant fight with the British forces. Cleveland and Sir Eyre Coote pitched battles with the brave Tilka's army. While the British army headed for

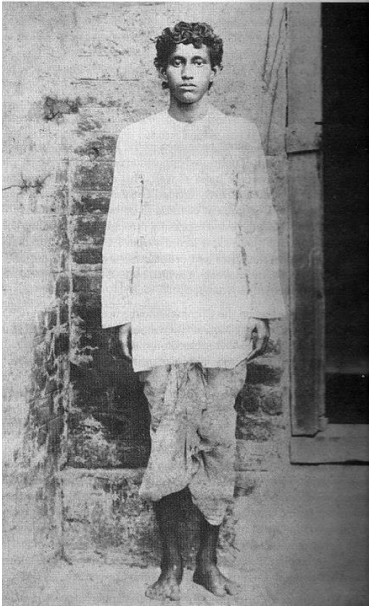
a battle Tilka's tribals began to secretly hit arrows on the English army. Tilka then climbed a palm tree and Cleveland came on a horse at that place. At that moment, Tilka fatally attacked Cleveland on January 13, 1784, with his arrows and killed him. The British got rattled with the attack and the death of Cleveland.

After the death of Cleveland, the British were on the look out to capture Tilka. One night, Tilka and tribals were celebrating with dance and songs and on the defeat of the British. Surprisingly a traitor Warlord Jaudah attacked Tilka's army. In this sudden attack Tilka survived but many of his soldiers were martyred and some were imprisoned. Tilka escaped from the scene and took refuge in the mountains of Sultanganj. The British English army then laid a trap for him in the surrounding mountain areas of Sultanganj and Bhagalpur. Tilka and his soldiers who were hiding in mountainous areas had to struggle a lot to survive. His soldiers died due to lack of proper food and starvation. By now Tilka changed his strategy and fought a guerrilla war with the British. In the process Tilka was trapped by the Britishers and was captured in 1785. The British after capturing Tilka tied him to a horse and dragged him all the way to the Collector's residence at Bhagalpur. His lacerated body was hung in public from a Banyan tree. Tilka will be fondly remembered eternally as a great son of Mother India.

After Indian Independence, a statue of Tilka was erected at the spot where he was hanged, which is located near the residence of Bhagalpur S.P. Bhagalpur University, in his honour, was also renamed as "Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University." A statue of Tilka was also erected at Dumka, Jharkhand in his honour.

Khudiram Bose

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (June 2023)



Khudiram Bose was one of the earliest young Indian revolutionist from the Bengal Presidency who opposed tooth and nail the British Rule in India. He played an important role in the Muzaffarpur Conspiracy Case with his close associate Prafulla Chaki. Khudiram along with Prafulla Chaki attempted to assassinate a British Magistrate Douglas Kingsford by throwing bombs on the carriage he was travelling. But Magistrate Kingsford was travelling in a different carriage and the throwing of the bombs resulted in the deaths of two British women. Prafulla however fatally

shot himself before the arrest. Khudiram was arrested and was tried for the murder of the two women and sentenced to death. He was one of the first Indian revolutionaries in Bengal to be executed by the British. At the time of his hanging Khudiram was only 18 years and 8 months old making him the second youngest revolutionary in India.

Mahatma Gandhi disapproved the act of Khudiram Bose and lamented the death of two innocent British women. He remarked that the Indian people will not win their freedom through these methods. However Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in his newspaper "Kesari", stoutly defended Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki and called for immediate Swaraj. Bal Gangadhar Tilak

was immediately arrested by the British Government on charges of sedition.

Khudiram Bose was born on 3rd December 1889 in a small village named Bahubeni situated in the Midnapur district of Bengal (present West Bengal). He was born to Trailokyanath Bose and Lakshmipriya Devi. His father was a Tehsildar and his mother was a housewife. He lost his mother when he was six years old and his father died a year later. His elder sister Aparupa Roy then took care of him and brought him to her house and got him admitted to Hamilton High School at Tamlak.

During the years 1902 and 1903 Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita visited Midnapore and they held a series of public lectures and private meetings with the existing revolutionary groups and emphasized the need for freedom from the British. Khudiram, who was a teenager at that time was an active participant in the discussions about the revolution and freedom movement.

Khudiram joined Anushilan Samithi when he was hardly 15 years old and thereby came into contact with the network of Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Anushilan Samithi was a fitness club which was used as an underground society for anti-British rule. In the first two decades of the 20th century, Anushilan Samithi supported revolutionary violence as the means for ending the British rule in India. It was led by the nationalists Aurobindo Ghosh and his brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Khudiram was arrested for distributing pamphlets against the British. Khudiram at the young age of 16 took part in planting bombs near the police stations and targeted the British Government officials.



Anushilan Samiti persisted in their attempt to kill Magistrate Douglas Kingsford. The activities of Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindra Ghosh and their associates roused suspicion in the minds of the Calcutta Police. The Calcutta police somehow came to know about the plans on Kingsford's life. The Commissioner of Police F.L. Halliday's alerting to the Superintendent of Police in Muzaffarpur were not taken seriously. Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki changed their names as Haren Sarkar and Dinesh Chandra Roy respectively and took up residence in a Dharamshala run by one Kishori Mohan Bandyopadhyay. Both of them monitored the activities and daily routine of Magistrate Douglas Kingsford. Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki successfully hid their identities for more than three weeks. Khudiram and Prafulla on the evening of 29th April itself were in place to execute their plans to kill Kingsford.

On the fateful day of 30th April, Kingsford and his wife were playing bridge at the European Club with the daughter and wife of Pringle Kennedy a British barrister. They decided to head home around 8.30 PM. Kingsford and his wife were in a carriage identical to the one carrying Kennedy and his family. As their carriage reached the eastern gate of the compound of the European Club, Khudiram and Prafulla quickly approached the carriage and threw the bombs into the carriage. A loud explosion was heard and the carriage was shattered and the Kennedy ladies sustained terrible injuries. Miss Kennedy died within an hour of the blast and Mrs. Kennedy died of injuries sustained in the attack, a couple of days later.

Khudiram and Prafulla went their own way to escape from being captured by the British. By the next morning Khudiram

had walked about 25 miles and reached a station called Waini. There he was confronted by two armed constables and was subsequently captured. They found 37 rounds of ammunition, Rs. 30 in cash, a railway map and a page of the rail timetable with him.

Prafulla travelled long arduous hours and around noon a civil named Trigunacharan Ghosh decided to save his life. He made arrangements for Prafulla to return to Kolkata the same night. He boarded a train from Samastipur and continued his onward journey with a train to Howrah. A Sub-Inspector of Police was travelling in the same compartment. He struck a conversation with Prafulla and realized him to be the other revolutionary. When Prafulla got down at the intermediate station to drink water, the Sub Inspector sent a telegram to the Muzaffarpur police station and later tried to apprehend Prafulla at the Mokamaghat station. Prafulla tried to fight his way through with his revolver but in the struggle, he shot himself in the mouth.

Khudiram was brought handcuffed from to Muzaffarpur on 1st May. The entire town of Muzaffarpur came to the police station to take a look at the teenage revolutionary surrounded by a team of armed policemen. Khudiram was then taken to the residence of Mr. Woodman, the district magistrate. The Statesman, a popular English daily, wrote on the following day, 2 May 1908. The Railway station was crowded to see the boy. A mere boy of 18 or 19 years old, who looked quite determined. He came out of a first-class compartment and walked all the way to the phaeton, kept for him outside, like a cheerful boy who knows no anxiety.....on taking his seat the boy cheerfully cried 'Vandemataram'.

The historical trial of Khudiram commenced on 21 May 1908. Judge Corndoff, Nathuni Prasad and Janak Prasad were the members in the Jury. Khudiram was tried along with

Mrityunjay Chakraborty and Kishorimohan Bandyopadhyay who were arrested for assisting the revolutionaries and accommodating Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki in his Dharamshala. Mrityunjay died during the trial itself and the trial of Kishorimohan was separated from that of Khudiram. Lawyers Kalidas Basu, Upendranath Sen and Kshetranath Bandopadhyay represented Khudiram's defense. They were joined later by Kulkamal Sen, Nagendra Lal Lahiri, and Satischandra Chakraborty and all of them fought the case without any fees.

On 23 May, Khudiram gave a statement to magistrate denying any involvement or responsibility regarding the bombing. Khudiram initially was not ready to sign the statement but did so after he was persuaded by his lawyers. On 13 June, the scheduled date for the verdict and sentence the Judge pronounced the death sentence for Khudiram. Khudiram spontaneously smiled at the verdict pronounced by the Judge. The Judge asked Khudiram whether he understood the sentence the pronounced. Khudiram replied to the affirmative. When the judge asked him again whether he had anything to say as regards his sentence Khudiram in front of an anxious packed audience replied with smile that if he could be given some opportunity he would teach the judge the skill of bomb-making. Such was the courage of the young boy. The Judge instructed the police to escort the boy out of the courtroom.

As per the law prevailing then, Khudiram had seven days to appeal to the High Court against the verdict. However Khudiram refused to appeal against the verdict. But after some persuasion by his lawyers who reasoned out that on appeal if he receives a life sentence instead of getting death sentence, he would live to serve his nation once free as age will be on his side when such event happens. Kudiram reluctantly agreed after this argument and an appeal was preferred in the High Court.

The appeal of Khudiram in the High Court hearing took place on 8 July 1908. Narendra Kumar Basu defended Khudiram's case and concentrated all his legal skills and experience to save Khudiram. He challenged the verdict of the session court by saying that the judgement was not according to law, was flawed and that according to Article 164 of the Penal Code, the accused is required to submit his statement in front of a first class magistrate which was not complied with and during the first statement Khudiram was not told anything of the person's identity and position.

Secondly, Narendra Kumar Basu argued the provision in the Article 364 requires that all questions to the accused be asked in the mother tongue and all answers in his mother tongue be documented verbatim in that language but in Khudiram's case it was done in English. Further, Khudiram's signature was required to sign the statement on the same day and at the time of the statement in the presence of the magistrate was required. But, Khudiram was made to sign the day after and in front of an additional magistrate. Finally, Narendra Kumar Basu argued that Prafulla alias Dinesh (the name used in the trial) was stronger than Khudiram and he was the bomb-expert among the two of them. Hence it was likely that the actually "Dinesh" who threw the bomb. Further, Prafulla's suicide before the verge of capture only strengthens the possibility of his being the actual thrower of the bombs. But,

INDIAN BOMB THROWER SMILES ON SCAFFOLD.

Khudiram Bose, the murderer of Mrs. and Miss Kennedy, was executed at Muzaffarpur, India, on the 11th instant.

Escorted by a number of armed police he was conducted to the scaffold which he mounted with his body erect. He was cheerful and smiling. His wrists were tied and he was blindfolded. Death was instantaneous. His cremation has been duly performed by his caste-men on the bank of Ganduck. The streets from the gaol to the ghat were lined by police and there were present on the ghat a large number of police officers including the Deputy Superintendent of Police. Numbers of people collected on the ghat, in the streets and in the by-lanes adjoining.

on a historical day, the British judges confirmed the conviction and sentence and dismissed the appeal.

The Amritha Bazar Partrika is one of the prominent newspaper of that era, carried the story of the hanging the next day, on 12 August under the caption "Khudiram's End: Died cheerful and smiling". The newspaper further wrote: *"Khudiram's execution took place at 6 a.m. this morning. He walked to the gallows firmly and cheerfully and even smiled when the cap was drawn over his head."* An established Anglo-Indian newspaper, *The Empire*, wrote: *"Khudiram Bose was executed this morning...It is alleged that he mounted the scaffold with his body erect. He was cheerful and smiling."* The *Kesari*, nationalist Marathi newspaper, observed on 26 May 1908: *"Neither the Jubilee murder of 1897, nor the reported tampering of the Sikh regiments had produced so much commotion, and the English public opinion seems inclined to regard birth of the bomb in India as the most extraordinary event since the mutiny at 1857."*

The Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote a touching poem to honour Khudiram. Khudiram is celebrated for his bravery and commitment to the Indian freedom as follows:

- Khudiram Bose Central College was established in 1965 as an undergraduate college in Kolkata, West Bengal. It offers courses only in arts and commerce and is affiliated with the University of Calcutta. Shahid Khudiram Station, a metro railway station near Garia in Kolkata.
- Shahid Khudiram Bose Hospital – a hospital on BT Road near Municipality Park.
- The Muzaffarpur Jail, where the freedom fighter was incarcerated and hanged on 11 August 1908, was renamed Khudiram Bose Memorial Central Jail.

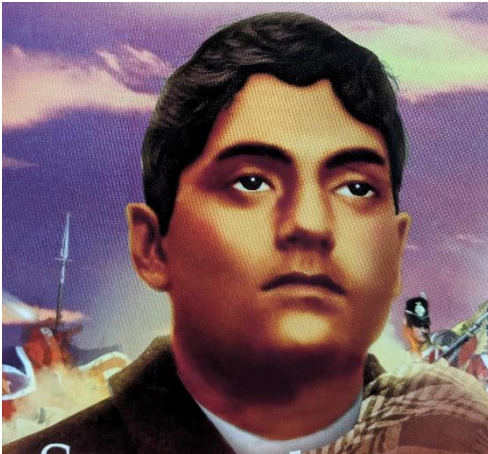
- Sahid Khudiram Siksha Prangan, a university campus for postgraduate studies of University of Calcutta, Kolkata. It is also known as Alipore Campus.
- Khudiram Anushilan Kendra which is located adjacent to the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Indoor Stadium in Kolkata.
- Khudiram Bose Pusa Railway Station

Over the years, Khudiram Bose and his sacrifice have been represented in several films like Main Khudiram Bose Hun (a 2017 film) and Khudiram Bose (a 2022 film).

Bagha Jatin

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (July 2023)

“We shall die to awaken the nation” - These are the famous words of Bagha Jatin. It is an irony of history that the supreme sacrifice made by Jatindranath Mukherjee alias Bagha Jatin, as he is popularly known, is little known outside Bengal and Orissa. The history of the Indian freedom struggle highlighted the non-violence movement, relegating the enormous role played by various freedom fighters who took part in the armed struggle in spite of the fact that well-documented records in Indian history. One such freedom fighter who took to arms for the freedom of India from the British is none other than Bagha Jatin who during the freedom struggle took to arms to achieve India’s freedom. Bagha Jatin was a revolutionary who terrified the British.



In 1915, much before India was declared independent in 1947 by the British, an attempt was made under the leadership of Jatin to pull the country out of British rule by means of armed insurrection. Jatin’s attempt can be taken as a preamble to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s armed struggle for India’s

independence. He fought a frontal battle against the British and laid down his life for Mother India. On 10 September 1915, he succumbed to severe bullet injuries in Balasore Hospital following a fierce battle with the British police.

Jatin was born on 7th December 1879 to Sharathshashi and Umeshchandra Mukherjee in Kayagram village in the undivided Nadia district which is now in Bangladesh. His father Umeshchandra Mukherjee passed away when Jatin was five years old. After the death of Umeshchandra Mukherjee his mother Sharathshashi settled in her parent's home in Kayagram along with Jatin and his sister. Though he was not aggressive during his childhood days, the events in his later years proved his boldness. One day he came running to his mother terrified by a dog that chased him. Sharath immediately, knowing the reason, gave him a burning log and asked him to chase the dog.

Though Jatin hesitated initially, later he picked up courage and chased the dog away. That incident made him overcome fear forever. Jatin's uncle Basant Kumar presented him with a horse. In no time Jatin picked up the art of handling the horse and often he would do away with the reins and saddle, and he would hold the horse by the tuft of hair on its neck spur to make it run at high speed on the empty path. From another uncle he also learned to row a boat. Jatin married Indubala Banerjee in 1900. They had four children: Atindra (1903), Ashalata (1907), Tejendra (1909), and Birendra (1913). When Atindra passed away in 1906 Jatin, with his wife and sister, set out on a pilgrimage and recovered their inner peace by receiving initiation from the saint Bholanand Giri of Haridwar.

Jatin on returning to his native village Koya in March 1906, came across a Royal Bengal tiger and fought hand-to-hand with it. Wounded, he managed to strike with a small dagger (Khukuri) on the tiger's neck and kill it instantly. Dr. Suresh Prasad Sarbadhikari, the famous surgeon of Kolkata, took upon himself the responsibility for treating Jatin whose body had been poisoned by the tiger's nails. Dr. Sarbadhikari, impressed by the heroism, published an article about Jatin's heroism in the English press. The Government of Bengal awarded him a Silver Shield with the scene of him killing the

tiger engraved on it. The title 'Bagha', meaning 'Tiger' in Bengali, became associated with his name from then on.

"Anandamath" written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was published in 1882 and the call "Bande Mataram" triggered unprecedented patriotism amongst the young men of Bengal. Jatin read "Anandamath" when he was a student in High School and was influenced by the teachings which had a significant bearing on his future thoughts and activities. Jatin was also into social activities and actively involved when cholera broke out. Jatin, as a college student, joined a relief camp organized by Sister Nivedita. Nivedita, an Irish, was an ardent follower of Swami Vivekananda. She introduced Jatin to Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda impressed upon Jatin to take up the mission to encompass together patriotic youth with "iron muscle" and "nerves of steel" who could plunge into the service anytime for the freedom of the motherland. Jatin's meeting with Sri Aurobindo ignited his support for the uprising against the British further. Sri Aurobindo entrusted the task to Jatin to create a "secret society" for training patriotic youth for a revolt against the British. The secret society came to be known as Jugantar and Bagha Jatin became its leader. Jugantar later became an all-India movement. The Jugantar Party established its units across India and even established units across South-East Asia, Europe, and America.

It was the time when the entire nation was discontent with the activities and atrocities committed by the British on the Indians. At that time, Jatin gave a clarion call "***Amra morbo, jagat jagbe***" (**We shall die to awaken the nation**) which triggered the revolution against the British. Thousands of patriotic youths joined Jatin's clarion call and joined the freedom movement. It was an era of freedom movement where cultural nationalism and socialism had a unique blend of revolt against the British.

Armed Insurrection Against British

Jatin took the path of violence for the cause of *Purna Swaraj* (total independence) as opposed to the principles of nonviolence of the Indian National Congress. The First World War broke out in 1914 and Jatin looked towards Germany for help. Jatin contacted the German Crown Prince for the delivery of arms and ammunition for an insurrection to get freedom for India. The responsibility for raising the funds and procuring the arms and ammunition was entrusted to MN Roy, a trusted lieutenant of Jatin. In 1915, Roy left India in search of and arrange for the procurement of German arms. Roy later recounted in his posthumously published memoirs:

The plan was to use German ships interned in a port at the northern tip of Sumatra, to storm the Andaman Islands and free and arm the prisoners there, and land the army of liberation on Orissa coast. The ships were armoured, as many big German vessels were, ready for wartime use. They also carried several guns. The crew was composed of naval ratings. They had to escape from the internment camp, seize the ships, and sail... Several hundred rifles and other small arms with an adequate supply of ammunition could be acquired through Chinese smugglers who would get them on board the ships.

Balasore the coastal town, was selected as the place where the shipload of arms consignment from Germany was to be delivered. Jatin, along with his followers, were hiding at Kaptipada village in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha which was situated in the vicinity of Balasore to receive the arms and ammunition from Germany. However, their plans did not fructify. One E V Voska, a Czech spy who knew the plans of Jatin and his associates leaked the information to the British authorities. British authorities swiftly swung into action and ensured that the arms and ammunition were impounded while on their way. Jatin and his associates reached Balasore by walking for two days through the rough terrain and stretch of

Mayurbhanj. The British Army took position on a hillock at Chashakhand village in Balasore. On September 9, 1915, Jatin and his associates took up a position in a small trench at Chashakhand near Balasore. However, tempted by the reward announced by the British for providing any information to Jatin and his associates, the local villagers informed the British police about the whereabouts of Jatin and his associates. A large contingent of British police headed by top police officers reached Balasore to counter the revolutionaries. The British police were armed with sophisticated weapons but Jatin and his team fought only with Mauser pistols.

The gun battle lasted for two hours with casualties on both sides. In the gun battle Jatin was seriously wounded and the next day he succumbed to injuries in Balasore city hospital. Although the armed uprising could not take off successfully, Jatin's death and the battle of Balasore had influence and inspiration for the fight against the British Raj for freedom by the later youth and freedom fighters. Jatin's mounting attacks shook the British administration in London. The recorded documents showed that Earl of Minto and Charles Hardinge, the consecutive Governor Generals of India had shown their deep concern about the rise of the Jugantar movement under the leadership of Jatin.



From Kaya in Bangladesh to Balasore in Odisha in India, Jatin made a long-lasting impression in the hearts of millions of Indians. It was widely believed that Jatin inspired Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to fight against the Pakistani army during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. Jatin's vision of independent India was far ahead of his time, that is - a modern India with politically free, economically prosperous and spiritually

progressive. Mahatma Gandhi had described Jatin as a 'divine personality'.

A locality in Kolkata had been named after Bagha Jatin. Barabati Girls High School situated near the banks of the river BudhaBalanga in Balasore town has a statue of Bagha Jatin as it was where the erstwhile Balasore district government hospital, where he breathed his last, stood. Chashakhand, a place near Phulari, which was only 15 km east of Balasore has a park in his memory. A postage stamp was released by the Government of India in 2007.

Appreciating the heroism of Bagha Jatin, Charles Augustus Tegart, then a top British police officer in India, wrote:

Bagha Jatin, the Bengali revolutionary, is one of the most selfless political workers in India. His driving power (...) immense: if an army could be raised or arms could reach an Indian port, the British would lose the war.

Augustus Tegart had once also told his colleagues:

If Bagha Jatin was an Englishman, then the English people would have built his statue next to Nelson's at Trafalgar Square.

Historian Prithwin Mukherjee, the grandson of Jatin, who vividly chronicled the detailed vignettes of the great freedom fighter from his birth until his death wrote:

Bagha Jatin chose to suffer and taught his followers to do so in the name of a future of India where citizens would be happy and prosperous amid the other free nations.

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee wrote:

Jatindranath was the well-known and principal leader of the second episode in the history of the revolutionary movement who belonged to that band of fighters, who had written a blood-red chapter of their country's fight for freedom. Sacrificing all they had... they rushed to the ritual call of death and, inch by inch, by shedding their lives, they had left for us the relish of a greater life.

Referring to the Battle of Balasore – where Jatin fought with valor– renowned author Hirendranath Mukherjee wrote:

The Balasore battle where Jatin, with select comrades, laid down his life remains a luminous landmark in India's struggle for freedom from British imperialist subjugations.

Rani Gaidinliu

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Sep 2023)

“WE ARE FREE PEOPLE, THE WHITE MAN SHOULD NOT RULE OVER US” proclaimed the 13 year old Gaidinliu in 1927. This statement was issued by Gaidinliu while giving a clarion call to the ethnic Nagas of the remote hill of India’s northeastern region. During 1937 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru met her in Shillong Jail and gave her the title “RANI” and thus Gaidinliu became Rani Gaidinliu. She was a Naga spiritual leader who led the revolutionaries to an armed uprising in the Northeast against the British.



India’s glorious history is scripted by historians under the influence of old imperial school of thought. In the process sadly many valiant freedom fighters and revolutionaries who fought valiantly and incessantly and laid their lives against the British were camouflaged and concealed. Gaidinliu is undoubtedly one of them.

Gaidinliu was born on 26th January 1915 in Luangkao village under Tamenglong District in

Manipur. She belonged to the Kabui tribe (also known Rongmei Tribe). Gaidinliu became a revolutionary when she was hardly 13 years old. She joined the “Heraka Movement”, formed by Haipou Jadonang, who happened to be Gaidinliu’s cousin. Jadonang was a spiritual leader of Nagas. Apart from spiritual activities,

the Heraka movement was strongly against British rule. Heraka movement got a setback when Jadonang was arrested and hanged after a fake trial in 1931.

After the unexpected passing away of Jadonang the leadership mantle was taken over by Gaidinliu when she was hardly 16 years old. Gaidinliu preached and followed Gandhian principles and launched an attack against British rule. She gathered Zeliangrong and other Naga tribes to revolt against the British and take recourse to nonpayment of taxes and oppose the other repressive measures taken by the British to contain the revolt. She later resorted to open rebellion by using guerilla warfare in Cachar hills in 1932 and in Hangrum village in March 1932, thus challenging the British. Consequently, the British formed a special team of Assam Rifles to capture Gaidinliu. Capt. MacDonald headed the Special Team. In October 1932, Gaidinliu and her associates were captured by the team, from their hiding place in Pulomi village. Gaidinliu was charged with murder and attempt to murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.



Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed with Gaidinliu while touring undivided Assam in 1937 in his capacity as the President of the Indian National Congress. He lamented that the rest of the nation was unaware of her sacrifices.

Talking of her imprisonment, Nehru wrote in December 1937:

"She dreamt of freedom for her people and the ending of all restrictions they suffered from; she raised the

banner of independence and called her people to rally around it. Perhaps, she thought rather prematurely that the British Empire was fading out. But that Empire still functioned effectively and aggressively, and it took vengeance on her and her people. Many villages were burnt and destroyed and this heroic girl was captured and sentenced to transportation for life. And now she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude."

In 'Gaidallo Ranee', published in the All India Congress Committee Newsletter (and republished in 1938 in the American periodical The Living Age), Nehru writes:

"India does not even know of this brave child of her hills. A day will come when India will remember her and cherish her and bring her out of her prison cell."

Incidentally, Jawaharlal Nehru met Gaidinliu at Shillong Jail in 1937 and promised to pursue her release. He took up her case with British Member of Parliament, Lady Astor, for her release from jail but was not successful. It was during this meeting Jawaharlal Nehru conferred on Gaidinliu the title "Rani". She was finally released from Tura jail in 1947 on his orders after India attained Independence having spent 14 long years in various prisons in Assam. She continued to work for the welfare and betterment of her people after her release from jail. She died on 17 February 1993. Incidentally, it is quite interesting to note that she was born on January 26 which is celebrated as Republic Day in India.



Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Birth Centenary celebrations of the legendary woman freedom fighter Rani Gaidinliu from North-East India. The Government of India issued a commemorative coin of hundred rupees and a circulation coin of five rupees on Rani Gaidinliu on 24th Aug 2015.

The Hindustan Times published an article on Gaidinliu and described her as the **"Daughter of the Hills"**. The State Government has developed a park along with her statue to commemorate the valiant freedom fighter Rani Gaidinliu. The Government of India also issued a postal stamp in 1996 to celebrate her.

Gaidinliu was awarded the Tamrapatra in 1972, the prestigious Padma Bhushan in 1982, Vivekananda Sewa Summan in 1983, and the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Puraskar (posthumously) in 1996.

Long live the name and fame of this valiant freedom fighter from the North East. **JAI HIND**

Maniram Dewan

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Oct 2023)

Maniram Dutta Baruah also known as Maniram Dewan was a freedom fighter from Assam, the North Eastern State of India.



He boldly opposed the British during the year 1800s. He was popularly known for his participation in the 1857 uprising against the British. India had been battered and plundered by the invasion of the Gazinis and

Ghoris and thereafter by the British. When India came under the British, they systematically weakened the culture, economy, education, agriculture and civilization of the country. However stiff resistance was shown by the patriotic people of India who opposed the British from time to time. When a freedom fighter was suppressed a new crop of freedom fighters emerged and valiantly fought against the British. These freedom fighters were from all parts of the country. However, only a few of them have been recognized and glorified in our history and in our textbooks. Their history and the great contributions made by many who sacrificed their life for the freedom of the country had been

overshadowed by historians. They remained as unsung heroes and were not celebrated. Maniram one such forgotten yet valiant freedom fighter from Assam, the North Eastern part of India.

Maniram's ancestors were from Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh) who migrated to Assam during the sixteenth century. Maniram's ancestors held high positions in the Ahom Court. During the Moamoria Rebellion (1769-1805) the Ahom rule considerably weakened. Thereafter the Burmese invasion of Assam during 1817- 1826 took place and during that time Maniram's family sought asylum in West Bengal which was under the British. During the First Anglo Burmese War held between 1824 to 1826 Maniram's family returned to Assam under the protection of the British. Maniram was born on 17 th April 1806 in Charing of Sibsagar District. Maniram in his early days served the British and later recognizing their misrule became a freedom fighter to bring India out of the clutches of the British rule.

Maniram initially was a close and loyal follower of the British. He was then appointed as Tehsildar and Sheristadar. In those days a Sheristadar was the Chief administrative officer in Indian courts entrusted with the task of receiving and checking court pleas. In fact, it was Maniram who informed the British regarding the Tea plantation which led to the British establishing Tea gardens in Assam. However, over a period Maniram shifted his loyalty to Ahom King Purandar Singha who was holding a purely formal position without any real authority. He resigned from the posts of Tehsildar and Sheristadar. Maniram slowly got dissatisfied with the attitude of the British towards the people. He totally opposed the draconian tax system imposed on the Assam people, exploitation of the local market conditions and introduction of opium cultivation by the British.

Maniram came to Calcutta in 1852 and made a petition at the Sadar Court in Calcutta with a demand that the Ahom king's administration should be restored. This petition was dismissed

by the Court. Thereafter he continued to stay in Calcutta itself and maintained communication with all his friends and others who were anti-British. The Sepoy Mutiny started in May 1857 and Maniram seized this opportunity to bring back Ahom King's rule. Maniram started a revolution against British rule with the sepoys who were stationed in various parts of Assam. He planned to launch a rebellion against the British, with support from the sepoys deployed in Assam. He also enlisted the support of various leaders who supported his plan for the revolution. Thus Maniram visualised a revolt in August 1857 with an intention to restore the Ahom King Kandarpeswar Singha rule and had planned to liberate Sivsagar and Dibrugarh from the British. He enticed the support of Piyali Barua, a compatriot, in executing the plan. Maniram sent letters to the leaders but unfortunately it got intercepted by the British and they found out the plan. Maniram was taken into custody and lodged in a jail in Jorhat along with his accomplice Piyali Barua. The trial was held on 26 th February 1858 and Maniram and Piyali Barua were hanged in Public at Central Jail, Jorhat.

After the hanging of Maniram his tea estates at Cinnamara and Senglung were auctioned and handed over to George



Gun of Maniram Dewan

Williamson who purchased the same for a throwaway price. However this proved to be a disaster for George Williamson as the loyal labourers refused to work under the new owners. Sometime later Cinnamara Tea estate was purchased by a local Tea company and presently taken over by Assam Tea Corporation.

After Maniram's death many folk songs in his memory known as the "Maniram Dewanar Geet", were composed by the local people and popularised amongst the locals. The Trade Centre at Gauhati was named "Maniram Dewan Trade Centre" and the Boys Hostel in Dibrugarh has been named "Maniram Dewan Boys" Hostel.

According to Debo Prasad Barooah, former Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University, Maniram Dewan and Piyali (or Peali) Barua became martyrs to the cause of freedom in Assam. Their sacrifice and also the sacrifice of their compatriots made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of the Assamese people who remembered with pride these heroes of 1857 at every stage of the freedom struggle.

Matmur Jamoh

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Nov 2023)

(Matmur Jamoh, a courageous Adi tribe warrior from North East, sought revenge against British oppression, assassinated officials in 1911, faced defeat, sentenced to life, and died in obscurity.)

Matmur Jamoh was one of the earliest patriotic freedom fighters from the North East of India who fought against the British. As a punishment, he was sentenced to life imprisonment and was lodged in Kalapani, the Cellular Jail in Andaman Islands. He breathed his last there. He was one of the earliest freedom fighters who received the most severe punishment for fighting against the British.

Around the year 1826, the North East province of India was affixed as a part of the British East India Company. The initial resistance to the British rule triggered somewhere around the year 1828-1830 itself. Simultaneously, the tribal communities belonging to the hilly areas showed resistance by fighting several battles against the British to protect their lands and livelihood from the forest areas. In the process, countless tribals laid their lives and made sacrifices for the common cause of freedom of the tribals. The resistance and the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters were not well documented by the Historians or others for unknown reasons. Not properly documenting the heroic deeds of the freedom fighters from North East of India led to a perception amongst the people that there was no resistance to the British from the North East region of India. In this article, we bring to the fore some of the untold history of the freedom fighters who fought bravely against the British and sowed the seeds for the freedom movement from North East India. Matmur Jamoh of Arunachal Pradesh is one among such valiant freedom fighters

from the North East India who opposed the British but remained largely not celebrated.



Adi tribesmen live in Pasighat which is in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district located in the eastern foothills of the Himalayas. Pasighat is one of the oldest towns in the North East of India. The British established Pasighat as a gateway to the greater Abor hills and northern Arunachal Pradesh, sometime in 1911. Matmur Jamoh was a warrior from the Adi tribe and was also the chief of Kebang. Kebang is a self-governing indigenous

mechanism of the Adi Tribe. They also administer the day-to-day affairs of the village.

Matmur Jamoh was born in the later part of 1900 to Matdung Jamoh of Yagrung Village which was in the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. There is no recorded evidence regarding the name of his mother or the exact date of birth. He grew up and became the Gam of his village. Noel Williamson, the then Assistant Political Officer, serving under the British at Sadiya was taking a tour of the Adi (the then Abor) in 1908 and visited Yagrung. Matmur as Gam of the village received Williamson when he arrived at Yagrung with traditional courtesies.

Matmur presented him with numerous presentations, but Noel Williamson not only refused the presents but also insulted and disgraced Matmur in front of the villagers in public. This incident left a deep scar in his heart and since then Matmur was determined to take revenge on Williamson. Matmur then started planning to take revenge against the British for intruding into the Adi territory. He persuaded some of the capable tribal warriors like Lotiang Taloh and Popiom Jamoh from Yagrung village, Lomlo Darang, and Bapak Jerang from Kebang and Lunrung Tamuk from Panggi village to revolt against the British.

In the meantime, the British used the tribals as labourers and coolies to transport their goods without paying any money and thus exploited them. The tribals were made to do menial jobs also. The British tried to show that they were superior to the Adi people and thus insulted them. In March 1911, Noel Williamson along with Dr. J.D.Gregorson and 44 others visited Adi Hills. During that time Matmur along with his accomplices also hatched a plan to assassinate them. They secretly planned and enticed the support of some people from the Rottung and Kebang villages. On 31 March 1911, Matmur along with his friends Namu Nonang and Lunrung Tamuk killed Williamson and his contingent of coolies. His other acquaintances from Kebang killed Dr. Gregorson and his coolies at the bank of the Sissen River.

Consequently, the British Government sent an army to the Adi Hills to counter Matmur and his accomplices and to capture them. Several battles took place between the two sides viz. between the people of Adi Hills and the British army. Adis ultimately lost the war to the British. By December 1911, after the battle at Kekar Monying and Kebang, Matmur keeping in mind the welfare and safety of his people surrendered to the British. The British Military Court tried him for treachery. On 2 April 1912, Matmur was convicted and sentenced to life. He was then shifted to Cellular Jail in Andaman. Details about

Matmur's death had not been recorded anywhere in the Cellular Jail records. Matmur, a great brave freedom fighter from the North East, thus died in obscurity.

Long live the name and fame of Matmur Jamoh.

JAI HIND

Helen Lepcha (a) Sabitri Devi

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Dec 2023)

(Helen Lepcha, a Sikkimese freedom fighter, aided Gandhi's movements, helped Subhas Chandra Bose escape, and contributed to social causes.)



The Indian independence struggle lasted a little over a century. The heroic sacrifices and courage exhibited during the freedom struggle of India, and it is regrettable that the details of the numerous people who aided one another in the revolution have not been properly documented in Indian

History and therefore largely unknown to the people. From Velu Nachiyar, Kuyili, Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai to Madam Bhikhaji Cama, there have been a long history of hundreds of women freedom fighters in India who involved themselves in the independence movement and have made significant contributions to the country's independence struggle.

This article is of one such brave unsung women freedom fighter, Helen Lepcha (also popularly known as Sabitri Devi) from the hill regions of Sikkim who marched alongside Mahatma Gandhi in the Non-Cooperation movement and helped Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to escape from his house confinement. India has a long history of brave women who have fought for the Indian independence. The struggle for Indian independence lasted over a century. According to Bipin Chandra: "It was a movement that inspired millions of people from all social groups and beliefs to take political action and brought a powerful colonial empire to its knees."

Helen Lepcha hailed from the indigenous Lepcha community, scattered across Sikkim, the Darjeeling Hills, Bhutan, and Nepal's Ilam District. Born on January 14, 1902, to Mr. and Mrs. Achung Lepcha in Sangmu Village, South Sikkim, she was the third of seven children. Her family moved to Kurseong when she was a child, seeking better opportunities in the princely State of Sikkim.

Having dropped out of school, Helen joined the Charkha and Khaddar movements in 1917 inspired by a speech delivered by a Bengali gentleman in Calcutta. Later under Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's granddaughter's guidance she learned the art of spinning and represented Calcutta at the Khadi and Charkha Exhibition in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Her selflessness became evident in 1920 when Bihar faced devastating floods. Helen selflessly helped the flood-ravaged

people and toured the famine-stricken areas with determination. Helen actively participated in relief efforts and assisted the flood-ravaged people. At that time, she had to meet Mahatma Gandhi, who invited her to Sabarmati Ashram and renamed her Sabitri Devi. She became a leader in the Congress Labour Union, working in parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Joining Gandhi in the Non-cooperation Movement in 1921, Helen led a procession of over 10,000 mine workers in Jharia, protesting tribal labour exploitation. Her popularity drew the British authorities' attention, leading to an arrest warrant. Evading arrest, she lived in hiding at Nehru's residence in Allahabad.

The movement reached the Darjeeling hills, where Helen initiated a door-to-door campaign against foreign goods. Despite a police-imposed curfew, she continued, leading to her arrest on January 29, 1922. After three months in Darjeeling Sadar Jail and three years of house arrest in Kurseong, she became known as Helen Didi.

In 1932, Helen was elected the first woman commissioner of Kurseong Municipality. During Netaji Subash Chandra Bose's house confinement in Kurseong in 1939-40, she played a crucial role in his escape to Calcutta and eventually to Germany. Helen actively participated in the Quit India Movement in 1942, and later focused on social activism, chairing various associations in Kurseong.

Recognizing her contributions, Helen received the Tamra Patra and a pension for freedom fighters on August 15, 1972, from the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Sikkim honoured her with the title 'Daughter of the Soil'. Despite her mass popularity, she led a simple Gandhian life until she breathed her last on 18 August 1980.

To commemorate Helen Lepcha under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the Culture Department in collaboration with the Directorate of Handlooms & Handicrafts, Government of Sikkim, organized a 5-day workshop on Lepcha Hat Weaving from 14/02/2022 to 18/02/2022. The programme was organized to make the public, especially the youth aware of our ancient traditions and culture. The programme was held at Dzongu, North Sikkim.

Despite her humble roots Helen Lepcha's great struggles and sacrifices unfortunately remain largely undocumented in the pages of Indian history.

U Kiang Nangbah

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Jan 2024)

(U Kiang Nangbah's 1862 revolt against British oppression, prophesying India's freedom, symbolizes unsung heroes' crucial role in independence.)



"Brothers and Sisters, please look carefully on my face when I die on the gallows. If my face turns towards the east, my country will be free from foreign yoke in the next 100 years and if it turns west, it will be a bondage for good."

These are the last words of U Kiang Nangbah while he was escorted to the gallows for staging a revolt against the British on the evening of December 30, 1862.

U Kiang Nangbah was born in 1835 to Ka Rimai Nangbah in Tpeppale, Jowai - his father's name and date of birth are not known as it was not properly documented. Jowai was the headquarters of the West Jaintia Hills district in the State of Meghalaya. It is home to the Pnar, a sub-tribe of the Khasi people. U Kiang Nangbah emerged as a pivotal figure in the resistance against the British annexation of the Jaintia Kingdom in 1835. He did not get any formal education. He was brought up by his

mother as a single child. Being a single child, he was influenced by his mother's patriotism and love for the country. She often explained the dangers of the British occupation and that they would make them slaves. This had a long-lasting effect on U Kiang Nangbah. Despite lacking royal lineage, U Kiang Nangbah, a common farmer from the Sookpoh clan, was deeply disturbed by British highhandedness. He was greatly inspired by the patriotism and the daring life story of his maternal uncle U Ksan Sajar Nangbah who revolted against the British at Chanmyrsiang.

Ram Singh was ruling the Khasi and Jaintia tribes and kingdoms. Raja Rajendra Singh, who succeeded his uncle Ram Singh, faced a significant challenge when the British demanded he sign a treaty agreeing to pay a tribute of Rs.10,000/-. Refusing to comply with what he considered an unreasonable demand, Rajendra Singh found himself in a precarious situation. In March 1835, Captain Lister issued a sudden proclamation, resulting in the annexation of the Jaintia Hills territory by the British. This annexation meant that all cultivatable land came under British control, leaving only the less profitable hilly region for Rajendra Singh. Realizing the financial impracticality of this arrangement, the king voluntarily surrendered the hills to the British. In the aftermath, Rajendra Singh chose to relocate to Sylhet (presently in Bangladesh), where he received a monthly pension of Rs.500/- from the British authorities.

The British during 1860 levied house tax on the people living in Jaintia. This was a new rule imposed by the British and the people were not accustomed to paying tax on their houses which they owned. They were offering only a goat and a small quantity of rice annually to their king and nothing more. The imposition of house tax came as a rude shock to them. Initially, the British adopted a non-interference policy, but tensions rose when they imposed taxes and interfered with

customs and religious practices. U Kiang Nangbah vehemently opposed these actions, notably the House Tax in 1860 in Jaintia Hills. A police station was established in Jwai in 1855 to check on the Jaintia people. It was established near the cremation ground of the Dhakar clan which was resented as they felt offended by the action of the British. Further, the establishment of a missionary school aggravated the feelings of the Jaintia Hill people. Thus, the anti-British movement started when the British tried to impose additional taxes and intruded into religious activities and their customs. However, the British undeterred imposed additional taxes and asserted their authority, exacerbating the discontent among the Jaintia people.

The catalyst for resistance was the confiscation and burning of weapons during the traditional dance at Yalong, further demonstrating British religious intolerance and indulgence. This incident fueled a mass movement, culminating in a Dorbar of the twelve Dalois, where U Kiang Nangbah emerged as a unanimous leader. Under U Kiang Nangbah's leadership, barricades were erected, weapons were manufactured, and attacks were launched on British establishments. The rebellion spread across Jaintia Hills, prompting the British to deploy more regiments for a full-scale military operation. Despite falling ill, U Kiang Nangbah continued to resist until his capture on December 27, 1862, due to a betrayal by U Long Sutnga. He faced a mock trial and was swiftly sentenced to death, highlighting the British resolve to crush resistance.

As U Kiang Nangbah faced the gallows on December 30, 1862, he uttered a prophetic statement. He declared that if his face turned east upon his death, the country would be free from foreign yoke in the next 100 years; if west, it would remain in bondage. U Kiang Nangbah's execution did not deter the eventual independence of India within a century. His struggle

mirrored that of indigenous peoples worldwide against the imposition of foreign values.

The anti-British revolutionary spirit that permeated through many of our freedom fighters played a pivotal role in the eventual attainment of our country's independence. Their bold and open resistance against British rule left an indelible mark on the history of our nation. Despite their significant contributions, the stories of these unsung heroes often remain in the shadows, and we must acknowledge and celebrate their heroic deeds. Regrettably, the narratives of these brave individuals have not received the attention they deserve, and there exists a gap in our collective understanding of the sacrifices and struggles endured by these freedom fighters. To truly honour our history and the quest for independence, it is incumbent upon us to actively seek out and disseminate these lesser-known stories.

By bringing these tales to light, we not only pay homage to the courage and determination of those who fought for our freedom but also ensure that future generations are aware of the diverse and inspiring narratives that constitute our national history. Failing to recognize and appreciate the contributions of these unsung heroes would be a disservice to their memory and a missed opportunity to instil a profound sense of pride and gratitude in the hearts of all citizens.

Radharaman Saha

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (March 2024)

(Radharaman Saha, a valiant freedom fighter from Tripura, displayed unwavering commitment, endured imprisonment, and contributed significantly to India's independence struggle.)

This freedom fighter's picture is not available. We are publishing a form where his photo is available.

No. 153/P/92 dt. 16/3/92

Personal Data

Name of the Freedom Fighter: RADHARAMAN SAHA

Father's/Husband's Name: Mr. N. Kishore Saha

Full Postal Address: Chandrahat, Boud, .../KMPH, P.O. R.K. P.O., .../KMPH, Tripura

Pension Sanction letter No. & Dt.: 10122/P/92/10/10

Pension Payment Order No. & Dt.: 10122/P/92/10/10

Signature of the holder: Radharaman Saha

1) Height: ... 2) Colour of eyes: ... 3) Colour of hair: ... 4) Visible markings: ... 5) Signature or left Thumb left leg: ...

In the annals of India's struggle for independence, the contributions of the fearless freedom fighters from Tripura stand as a testament to the resilience and determination of the Indian spirit. From the verdant hills of this Northeastern State emerged individuals who dedicated their lives to the cause of liberating their nation

from colonial rule. Through their unwavering courage, sacrifice, and fierce commitment, these valiant souls left an indelible mark on the pages of history, inspiring generations to come. Their stories serve as a reminder of the diverse tapestry of heroes who united under the banner of freedom, transcending boundaries and barriers in pursuit of a common goal. As we delve into the tales of these unsung heroes, we uncover a rich tapestry of courage, sacrifice, and unyielding resolve, weaving together the fabric of India's journey towards

independence. Radharaman Saha is one such valiant freedom fighter from Tripura whose sacrifice was not documented in Indian history and hence not remembered by the people.

Radharaman Saha, a valiant freedom fighter, was born in 1918 in the quaint village of Sangrais, nestled within the boundaries of the Comilla district in British-ruled India. His father, the late Nil Krishna Saha, hailed from a lineage of businessmen with deep-rooted connections to agriculture, laying the foundation for Radharaman's upbringing amidst a blend of commerce and agrarian traditions.

Even in his formative years, Radharaman displayed an unwavering commitment to the cause of liberation from British oppression. With Comilla emerging as a pivotal hub of resistance against colonial rule, Radharaman found himself gravitating towards like-minded individuals, forming alliances with fellow freedom fighters such as Naresh Chandra Bhattacharya, Tarapasanna Roy, and others. Together, they embarked on various daring endeavors aimed at dismantling the shackles of colonial dominance and ushering in an era of sovereignty for their beloved motherland.

Following his involvement in anti-British activities in Tripura, Radharaman sought refuge in the Sonamura area of Comilla. Remarkably, the distance between his native village, Sangrais, and Sonamura was a mere kilometer, symbolizing the interconnectedness of his journey and the proximity of his convictions to the soil from which he sprung. Despite achieving academic milestones such as his matriculation, Radharaman's fervent dedication to the freedom struggle eclipsed any aspirations for further formal education. His unwavering resolve led him to immerse himself fully in the task of fortifying the anti-British movement and spearheading social initiatives within the Comilla region.

In 1937, the inevitable repercussions of his resistance caught up with him as Radharaman faced imprisonment for his active participation in the anti-British movement. Confined within the

confines of Comilla Cantonment Jail for a span of two years, he endured the hardships of incarceration with stoic resilience, his spirit unbroken and his resolve undeterred by the oppressive forces that sought to suppress the flame of freedom burning within him.

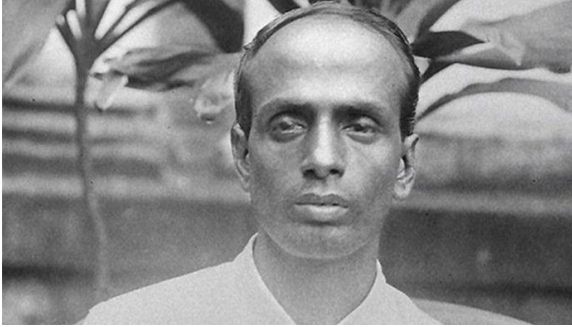
The year 1955 marked a significant juncture in Radharaman's life as his family made the decision to relocate to Udaipur. Despite the change in surroundings, his unwavering commitment to the cause of independence remained steadfast. Upon his arrival in Udaipur, Radharaman seamlessly transitioned into the fabric of the local political landscape, continuing his association with the Congress party and contributing tirelessly to the collective endeavour of nation-building.

Radharaman Saha's indelible imprint on the annals of India's struggle for independence endures as a testament to his unwavering courage, unyielding determination, and unshakeable resolve. His contributions to the cause earned him not only the admiration and respect of his contemporaries but also a revered place in the hearts of future generations, who continue to draw inspiration from his exemplary life and noble deeds.

The passing of Radharaman Saha in 2003 marked the culmination of a life lived in service to a cause greater than oneself. As the nation mourned the loss of one of its bravest sons, his legacy remained etched in the collective memory of a grateful nation, serving as a beacon of hope and a reminder of the sacrifices made by countless individuals in the pursuit of freedom and justice.

Surya Sen

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Apr 2024)



Surya Sen, also known as Surya Kumar Sen, remains a towering figure in the annals of the Indian independence movement, revered for his indomitable spirit

and unwavering commitment to the cause of freedom. Born on March 22, 1894, in the idyllic town of Noapara, Chittagong, Sen hailed from a Bengali Baidya family, imbued with the rich cultural heritage and fervent patriotism that characterized the era. His journey toward revolution and his pivotal role in the 1930 Chittagong armoury raid epitomizes the courage and sacrifice of those who dared to challenge colonial oppression.

The seeds of Sen's revolutionary fervour were sown during his formative years at Berhampore College, where he was deeply influenced by the nationalist ideals that swept across the Indian subcontinent. The fervent call for independence resonated deeply with Sen, igniting a fire within him to fight against the shackles of British rule. His involvement with the Indian National Congress further fuelled his passion for liberation, as he eagerly embraced the principles of non-violent resistance advocated by Mahatma Gandhi while also recognizing the necessity of more assertive measures in the struggle for freedom.

Surya Sen was brilliant and had an inspiring organising capacity from his early days. He possessed immense courage

and at the same time very humane in his approach. His favourite words were " Humanism is a special virtue of a revolutionary. As a school teacher, Sen wielded significant influence within the community, earning the revered title of "Master Da." His dedication to education extended beyond the confines of the classroom, as he tirelessly worked to instil a sense of national pride and unity among his students. In 1918, Sen assumed the mantle of president of the Indian National Congress's Chittagong branch, a position that showcased his leadership qualities and unwavering commitment to the cause of independence. Surya Sen was a great admirer of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam.

Sen's magnetic charisma and organizational acumen soon attracted a cadre of like-minded individuals, forming the nucleus of what would later be known as the Chittagong group. Comprising notable figures such as Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, and Lokenath Bal, this group would play a pivotal role in shaping the course of the independence movement in the region. Together, they embarked on a daring mission to challenge British authority and strike a blow for freedom.

However, Sen's revolutionary activities did not go unnoticed by the colonial authorities, and in 1926, he was arrested and imprisoned for his participation in the Non-cooperation movement. Despite enduring the hardships of incarceration, Sen remained resolute in his convictions, firmly believing in the righteousness of his cause and the inevitability of India's eventual liberation.

The turning point in Sen's revolutionary career came with the audacious Chittagong armoury raid of 1930, a daring operation orchestrated with meticulous planning and steely resolve. Leading a band of dedicated revolutionaries, Sen masterminded the seizure of arms and disruption of communication systems, aiming to cripple British control and inspire widespread resistance. Although the raid succeeded in acquiring arms, the failure to secure ammunition underscored

the immense challenges faced by the insurgents in their struggle against a formidable colonial power.

The ensuing battle with British forces was fierce and bloody, resulting in casualties on both sides. Undeterred by the setbacks, Sen and the surviving members of the group dispersed into hiding, launching subsequent raids on government personnel and property as part of their relentless campaign for freedom. Sen's ability to evade capture showcased his resourcefulness and determination, as he adopted various disguises and sought refuge in the homes of sympathetic allies.

Yet, betrayal lurked in the shadows, and in February 1933, Sen's luck finally ran out as he was captured by British authorities. Despite enduring unspeakable torture and suffering at the hands of his captors, Sen remained steadfast in his convictions, refusing to betray his comrades or abandon his principles. His unyielding courage in the face of adversity served as a beacon of hope for countless others who yearned for freedom and justice.

In his final moments, Sen penned a poignant letter to his fellow revolutionaries, urging them to carry on the struggle with unwavering determination and steadfast resolve. His execution on January 12, 1934, alongside his comrade Tarakeswar Dastidar, marked the culmination of his sacrifice for the noble cause of Indian independence. Yet, even in death, Sen's spirit lived on, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for a better, liberated future.

The Chittagong rebels made an important change in the freedom struggle. The individual acts of heroism or assassination of a British official took a backstage. Instead they aimed at the organs of the British administration.

Surya Sen firmly believed and said that " A dedicated band of youth must show the path of organized armed struggle in place

of individual action. Most of us will have to die in the process but our sacrifice for such a noble cause will not go in vain."

A significant turn of events in the Revolutionary Nationalist movement in Bengal was the large-scale involvement and participation of young and old women. Under the leadership of Surya Sen the women folk provided shelter, acted as custodians of arms, etc. and also bravely fought with the guns.

Sen's legacy endures as a testament to the power of resilience and the triumph of the human spirit against seemingly insurmountable odds. His unwavering commitment to the cause of freedom continues to inspire millions across the globe, serving as a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who dared to challenge injustice and tyranny. In commemorating Sen's life and legacy, we honour not only the man himself but also the countless unsung heroes who stood alongside him in the struggle for a brighter tomorrow.

JAI HIND

Rash Behari Bose

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Aug 2024)

In its two hundred years of colonial rule, the British Raj suppressed numerous revolutionaries, both those who adopted nonviolent means and those who engaged in armed



insurrection. Every threat to British dominance was ruthlessly hunted down and eliminated. Yet, one remarkable figure managed to evade capture for decades, despite relentless British efforts. This man masterminded the Delhi Conspiracy Case, planned armed insurrections with Bagha Jatin and another valiant freedom fighter who fought against the British, collaborated with the Ghadar revolutionaries, and laid the groundwork for the Indian

National Army. He was none other than Rash Behari Bose, the revolutionary whom the British could never capture.

Rash Behari Bose was born on May 25, 1886, in Subaldaha Village, West Bengal. From an early age, he was inspired by the revolutionary activities of the late 19th century. Eminent personalities like Swami Vivekananda and Surendranath Banerjee, along with events like the French Revolution and novels such as Anandmath, deeply influenced his ideas and beliefs about revolution and the struggle for freedom.

Bose later moved to Dehradun, where he worked as a clerk at the Forest Research Institute. His proficiency in several Indian languages proved advantageous during his revolutionary activities. The period between the late 19th and early 20th century saw a significant rise in revolutionary activities across India, fueled by the oppressive British rule and their draconian laws.

The unjust policies of the British authorities, including the Partition of Bengal, wounded the patriotic sentiments of the Indian populace. It was during this time that Rash Behari Bose decided to join the freedom struggle wholeheartedly. He met Bagha Jatin, another notable revolutionary, and together they worked towards initiating an armed insurrection against the British Raj.

Bose played an important role in the infamous Delhi Conspiracy Case of 1912. The revolutionaries planned to assassinate the Viceroy of British India, Lord Hardinge. On December 23, during a grand procession welcoming King George V, a 16-year-old named Basant Kumar Biswas, disguised as a female, threw a powerful homemade bomb at Hardinge's carriage. The explosion seriously injured Hardinge and killed several attendants. This audacious attack made Bose a hero in the eyes of many Indians. Despite the British authorities' efforts to capture him, Bose managed to evade arrest by adopting various disguises and identities. The news of the attack on Hardinge spread like wildfire, and Bose became a symbol of resistance and freedom.

With the outbreak of the First World War, revolutionary activities intensified. The Jugantar group, under the leadership of Bagha Jatin and Rash Behari Bose, planned a large-scale armed rebellion against the British, with support from the German Empire. They aimed to initiate a pan-Indian mutiny, backed by the Indian Armed Forces.

The revolutionaries, including Vishnu Ganesh Pingle of the Ghadar Party, made Bose their leader. Bose, impressed by the patriotic fervor of the Ghadarites, accepted the proposal. The insurrection was planned for February 21, 1915. However, the British learned of the plot, leading to its suppression and the martyrdom of Bagha Jatin in the Battle of Balasore.

In June 1915, Bose fled to Japan, where he accepted Japanese citizenship and married Tosiko Soma. The Soma family appreciated Bose's dedication to India's freedom struggle. While in Japan, Bose learned the language and worked as a journalist, highlighting India's plight and the Indian perspective on global platforms.

Bose's efforts led to a political conference in Tokyo on March 28, 1942, organized to discuss India's political issues. This conference resulted in the formation of the Indian Independence League, with Subhas Chandra Bose as its president. They also initiated the task of organizing an armed force from captured Indian prisoners of war in Malaya and Burma, leading to the foundation of the Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj on September 1, 1942.

In recognition of his relentless efforts, the Japanese government honored Bose with the Order of Merit.

Rash Behari Bose tirelessly worked for India's freedom, laying the foundation of the INA and planning revolts with leaders like Bagha Jatin and the Ghadarites. His revolutionary activities significantly shook the British Raj, which failed to suppress him despite numerous attempts. Bose became an inspiring figure for young nationalists and revolutionaries.

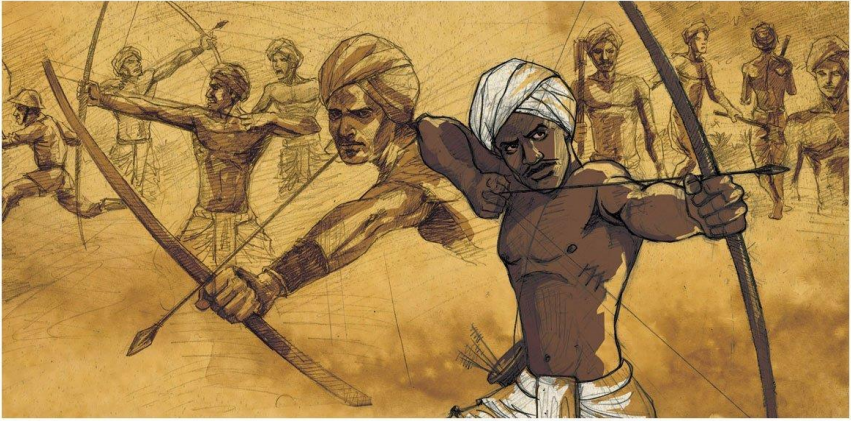
While leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi received significant recognition for their contributions to India's freedom struggle, the sacrifices of Rash Behari Bose

and others are often overlooked. Bose's efforts crippled the British Raj's foundation and inspired millions to fight for India's independence. His legacy, though less celebrated, remains a crucial part of India's history, deserving recognition and tribute. As we honor the prominent figures of India's freedom movement, let us also remember and pay homage to Rash Behari Bose, the elusive revolutionary who harassed the British Raj for decades and never got caught.

JAI HIND

Veer Budhu Bhagat

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (Jul 2024)



When we honor the freedom fighters who made the ultimate sacrifice for Bharath, we often overlook the tribal leaders who led revolts against the British Raj. Men like Gunda Dhur and Alluri Sitarama Raju, despite lacking formal military training, fought valiantly against the well-equipped British troops for the freedom of the Indian subcontinent. As John Milton a famous English poet wrote about a hundred years ago "They also serve who only stand and wait." One such charismatic warrior was Veer Budhu Bhagat, born on February 17, 1792, in Silagain village, present-day Jharkhand.

Born into a farming family, Budhu Bhagat harbored a deep-seated hatred for the British and their dominance over his homeland from an early age. He had a keen interest in fencing and archery and was an excellent horse rider. His skills in warfare and weaponry earned him a reputation as a divine entity among his fellow villagers. Driven by a desire to engage in armed resistance against the British regime, Budhu

Bhagat's resolve was further strengthened when the British, in collaboration with local zamindars, began exploiting the tribal communities. This exploitation prompted Veer Budhu Bhagat to lead an armed insurrection against the oppressors.

Revolt Against the British Raj

In 1831, Veer Budhu Bhagat led the Kol Rebellion against the British in Singhbhum, alongside other leaders like Madara Mahato and Joa Bhagat. This revolt occurred 27 years before the great mutiny of 1857 and can be seen as one of the first wars of Indian independence. The rebellion's impact was profound, spreading across Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamu, and Manbhum.

By 1832, Budhu Bhagat had inspired the Larka Rebellion, galvanizing the tribal people to fight against British and zamindar oppression. The rebellion shook the British authorities, spreading unrest to regions like Sonpur and across Chhotanagpur. The British responded with ruthless suppression, determined to capture or kill Budhu Bhagat, believing that without him, the rebellion would weaken.

Budhu Bhagat's tribal army adopted guerrilla warfare tactics, which demoralized the British soldiers who were unfamiliar with the local terrain. The hit-and-run strategies inflicted heavy casualties on the British troops, who struggled to combat the elusive and strategic attacks of Budhu Bhagat's forces.

Legacy Largely Forgotten in the Indian War of Independence

It is hard to believe that during a time when most of the Indian subcontinent was under British control and many Indians were compliant with the colonial rule, a young warrior from

Jharkhand, armed with traditional weapons like axes, swords, bows, and spears, was fiercely fighting for the independence of Maa Bharti. Budhu Bhagat not only fought against the Raj but also fostered a sense of unity and a spirit of independence among his fellow tribal people.



To quell the rebellion, the British called in reinforcements from Barrackpore, Danapur, and Patna, offering a 1000 rupee reward for information leading to Budhu Bhagat's capture. However, the natives of Jharkhand remained loyal to their hero and refused to betray him.

On April 13, 1832, the British received information that Budhu Bhagat and his troops were stationed in Tiku village. They immediately dispatched five companies under the command of Captain Impey to capture or kill Budhu Bhagat. Upon learning of the impending attack, Budhu Bhagat decided to surrender, aware that the British would show no mercy and would massacre the entire village population.

Despite this, the 300 villagers present chose to defend their hero at all costs. Armed only with swords and axes, they fought bravely against the British forces, equipped with advanced guns and weapons. In the fierce battle that ensued, Budhu Bhagat's children also attained martyrdom, symbolizing patriotism and sacrifice. His sons, Haldhar and Giridhar, died

fighting against the British, leaving a legacy of valor and resistance.

Enduring the Legacy

The story of Veer Budhu Bhagat lives on in the folklore of Jharkhand, though his name is scarcely known outside the region's borders and mountains. When discussing the first war of independence in 1857, it is crucial to remember the heroes who fought against colonial rule long before, paving the way for future generations.

Budhu Bhagat's rebellion was not just a fight against the British but also a struggle against the exploitation and oppression faced by the tribal communities. His leadership and bravery inspired many, creating a sense of unity and resistance among the tribals. The British, recognizing the threat posed by Budhu Bhagat, went to great lengths to suppress the rebellion, capturing and killing him. However, his legacy of courage and defiance continues to inspire, highlighting the significant role played by tribal leaders in India's struggle for independence.

The sacrifices of tribal leaders like Budhu Bhagat must be acknowledged and celebrated as integral parts of India's freedom movement. Their stories of resistance and bravery are vital chapters in the history of India's fight for independence, deserving of recognition and tribute. As we honor the heroes of 1857, let us also remember and pay homage to those who fought valiantly before them, ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

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 labourers for the British Government in India and overseas.

After Lucknow was captured, she, along with a large number of followers, was stationed in the fort of Baundi in the Bahraich district. She strengthened the fort 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 located in Kathmandu near Jama Masjid, Ghantaghar, 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.

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 know 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.

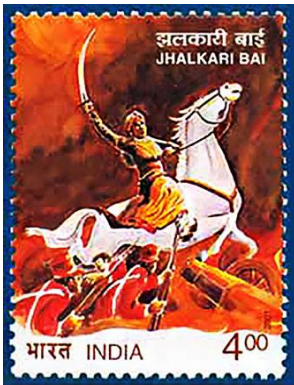
Field Marshal Hugh Henry Rose of the British army in 1858, laid a siege of Jhansi to put an end to the mutiny. It has been well documented in history books that the brave queen took on the British forces from her fort with just an army of 4,000. She could have held on to the fort for long but she was 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 for 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 Tej 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 19th 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.

Mangal Pandey

By C. Badri, Consulting Editor (June 2024)



In the history of India's struggle for independence, Mangal Pandey stands out as a pivotal figure whose actions ignited a nationwide movement against British colonial rule. Born on July 19, 1827, in the village of Nagwa, near Akbarpur, Uttar Pradesh, Pandey's courageous stand on March 29, 1857, is remembered as a seminal moment in the fight for Indian independence. His life, marked by both bravery and tragedy, is a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who dared to challenge the might of the British Empire.

Mangal Pandey was born into a Brahman family, which was part of the upper caste in Hindu society. This background imbued him with a keen sense of duty, honor, and religious devotion. These values played a crucial role in shaping his later actions against British rule. In 1849, at the age of 22, Pandey joined the British East India Company's army. His decision to enlist was driven by the prospect of a stable career and the relative prestige associated with serving in the military. However, Pandey's aspirations for a military career were soon overshadowed by the growing tensions between his professional obligations and his religious convictions.

The mid-19th century was a period of notable change and upheaval in India. The British East India Company, which had steadily expanded its control over the Indian subcontinent, was increasingly encroaching on the traditional rights and privileges of the Indian population. One of the most contentious issues was the introduction of the new Enfield P-53 rifle. The cartridges for this rifle were rumoured to be greased with cow and pig fat. For Hindu and Muslim soldiers, known as sepoy, this was a direct affront to their religious beliefs — Hindus revere cows as sacred, while pigs are considered unclean by Muslims. The use of these cartridges was seen as a deliberate attempt by the British to undermine their faiths.

Mangal Pandey was deeply affected by the introduction of these greased cartridges. The controversy surrounding them catalysed widespread discontent among the Indian soldiers, particularly within the Bengal Native Infantry, where Pandey served. The perceived insult to their religious sentiments added fuel to the already simmering grievances against British rule, including issues such as low pay, lack of promotion opportunities, and the general disdain with which Indian soldiers were treated by their British officers.

On March 29, 1857, Mangal Pandey took a bold stand against this oppression. Armed with a loaded musket, he stepped forward at the Barrackpore parade ground, urging his fellow sepoy to revolt against their British officers. Pandey's call to arms was a significant act of defiance. He managed to wound two British officers, Lieutenant Baugh and Sergeant-Major Hewson, before being subdued. Pandey's actions were not merely a spontaneous outburst but a calculated attempt to spark a broader rebellion against British rule.

Pandey was arrested and put on trial. Despite his defence, he was found guilty of mutiny and sentenced to death. On April



8, 1857, Mangal Pandey was executed by hanging. His execution did not extinguish the flames of rebellion he had ignited; rather, it served as a rallying cry for other discontented soldiers and civilians across India. Pandey became a martyr for the cause of Indian independence, and his sacrifice inspired others to take up arms against the British.

The larger context of Pandey's rebellion sheds light on the broader dynamics of colonial rule in

India. The annexation of the royal state of Oudh in 1856 had already created significant unrest among the local population and the sepoys recruited from that region. The loss of traditional privileges and the heavy-handedness of British administration further exacerbated the discontent. Pandey's defiance can thus be seen as part of a larger pattern of resistance against British policies that were perceived as exploitative and disrespectful to Indian traditions and rights.

The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, erupted shortly after Pandey's execution. The rebellion was a widespread but unsuccessful uprising against the British East India Company's rule. It began in Meerut and quickly spread to other parts of northern and central India. The rebels included not only

sepoys but also peasants, landlords, and princes who were dissatisfied with British rule. The rebellion saw significant battles and sieges, including the sieges of Delhi and Lucknow.

While the rebellion was eventually crushed by the British, it marked a turning point in the history of British India. The widespread nature of the uprising and the ferocity of the fighting forced the British government to reconsider its approach to governing India. In 1858, the British Crown took direct control of India from the East India Company, leading to the establishment of the British Raj. The administrative changes that followed aimed to address some of the grievances that had fuelled the rebellion, although many of the underlying issues remained unresolved.

Each year, on July 19, Mangal Pandey Jayanti is celebrated across India to honour his memory and contributions to the struggle for independence. In 1984, the Indian government issued a commemorative postage stamp featuring Mangal Pandey's portrait, recognizing his role in the fight for independence. His life and actions have been immortalized in various forms of media, including the 2005 Bollywood film "The Rising: Ballad of Mangal Pandey," which brought his story to a broader audience. The film dramatized Pandey's life and the events leading up to the rebellion, ensuring that his legacy would live on for future generations.

The significance of Mangal Pandey's legacy can be understood through the lens of India's broader struggle for independence. The rebellion he helped spark was one of the earliest and most significant uprisings against British rule, setting the stage for subsequent movements led by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose. These leaders, inspired by the sacrifices of early martyrs like Pandey, continued the fight for independence through various means, including non-violent civil disobedience and armed resistance.

In conclusion, Mangal Pandey's life and legacy are emblematic of the broader struggle for Indian independence. His courageous stand against the British in 1857 ignited a flame of resistance that would eventually lead to the end of colonial rule in India. Pandey's story is a testament to the power of individual action to inspire collective change and the enduring impact of those who dare to challenge tyranny. As India continues to honour his memory, Mangal Pandey remains a beacon of hope and inspiration, reminding us that the flame of freedom can never be extinguished.

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