

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's Foreword for PreSense100

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



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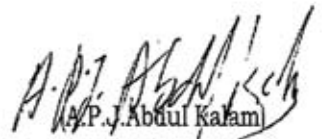
FOREWORD

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)

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.

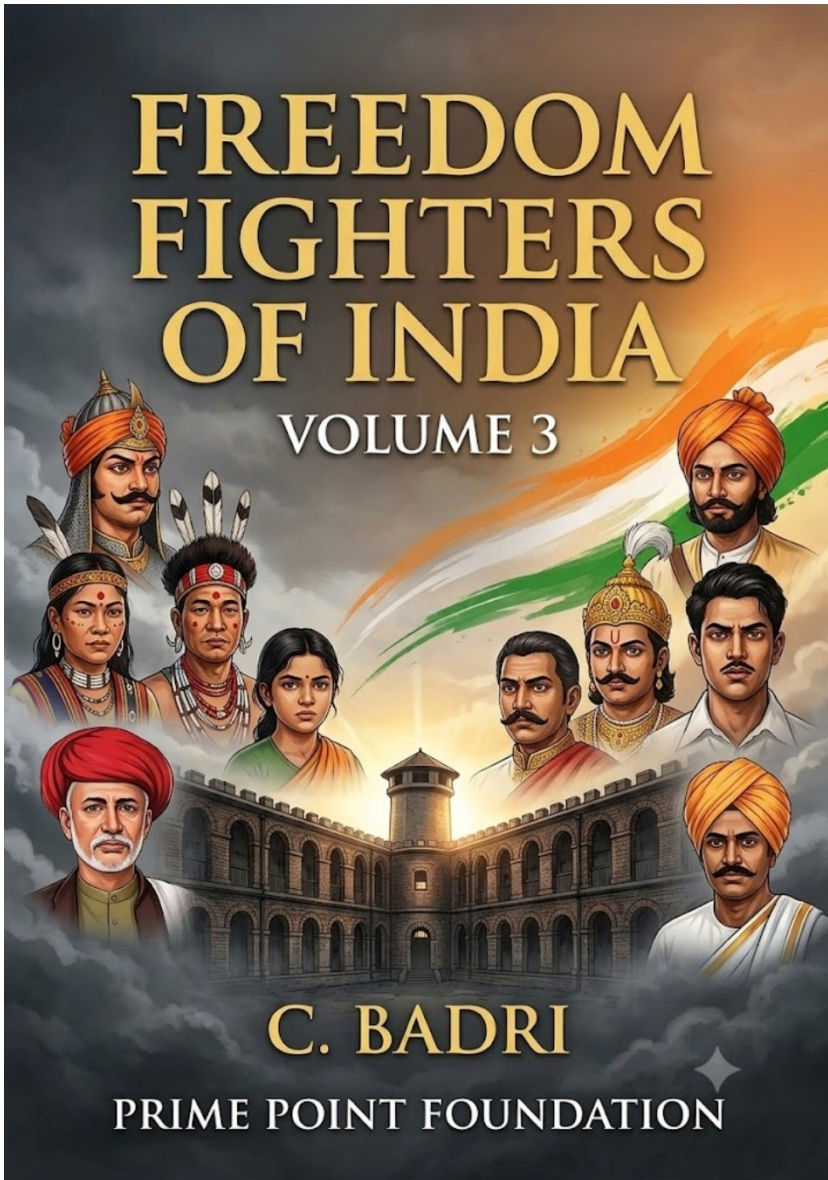
In the past 26 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication and digital journalism.

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 2026, the Foundation has published 233 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.



Publishing date August 2026

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ISBN 978-93-91803-17-9

Pages 156

Price Free distribution

Publisher Prime Point Foundation, 14,
Vasan Street, T Nagar, Chennai
60005

Printer Adyar Students Xerox P Limited,
Triplicane, Chennai 600005

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Introduction

Dedication



*To **Lord Sri Krishna**, the Almighty, my eternal guide and strength. Like the flute that sings only through His touch, this book flows through His divine will. May it serve as an offering at His feet and illuminate minds with wisdom and purpose.*

🙏 **Jai Shri Krishna!** 🙏

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The PreSense100

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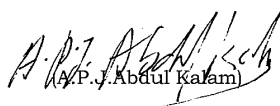
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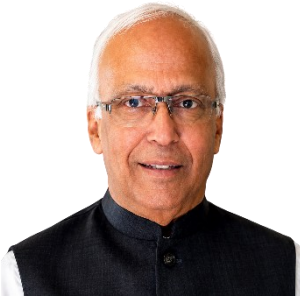
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28th May 2015


A.P.J. Abdul Kalam


Authors Profile

C. Badri is the Editor-in-Chief of the digital magazine *PreSense*, a platform dedicated to insightful and socially relevant content. A seasoned banker by profession, he brings over four decades of rich experience in the fields of



banking and finance. He served with distinction as General Manager at Canara Bank and later as General Manager and Chief Vigilance Officer at Indian Overseas Bank, where he played a pivotal role in strengthening institutional governance and vigilance.

Beyond his professional achievements in banking, C. Badri maintains a strong and ongoing interest in cybersecurity. In this field, he stays actively involved, particularly in raising awareness among senior citizens and the general public.

Equally dear to him is the history of India's freedom movement. He has been a passionate researcher and advocate for documenting the lives and sacrifices of lesser-known freedom fighters from across the country. He strongly believes that their contributions deserve greater recognition and public remembrance, and he has worked tirelessly to bring their stories to light through his writings.

C. Badri also serves as the President of the Probus Club of Madras South, a reputed organisation of senior professionals dedicated to lifelong learning, fellowship, and

service to society. In this role, he continues to inspire, mentor, and engage with members on matters of civic responsibility, digital awareness, and national heritage.

With a rare combination of professional expertise, social commitment, and intellectual curiosity, C. Badri continues to meaningfully contribute to the public discourse and nation-building.

Prime Point Foundation: 25 Years of Empowering India's Youth



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Since 1999, Prime Point Foundation has been helping young Indians become better leaders and communicators. Founded by Shri K Srinivasan, a former banker turned digital journalist, this non-profit organisation has grown into one of India's most respected youth development platforms.

What We Do

The Foundation runs five key programmes that make a real difference:

eMagazine PreSense - Started in 2006 following Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's suggestion, this digital magazine promotes positive journalism. With 233 editions published till July 2026 and recognition from India Book of Records, it includes the popular cartoon character Prince, which Dr Kalam himself launched in 2008.

Sansad Ratna Awards - Since 2010, these prestigious awards honour India's best-performing MPs and Parliamentary Committees. Dr Kalam inaugurated the first ceremony, and over 15 years, 143 Awards have been presented. The India Book of Records acknowledges this as the largest parliamentary award programme run by civil society.

Next Gen Political Leaders - This programme trains young people who want to enter politics, connecting them with experienced Ministers and MPs through workshops and mentoring sessions.

Education Loan Task Force - Helping students and families understand education loans since 2010. The team has answered over 30,000 questions and helped resolve 5,000 serious complaints with banks.

Digital Journalists Association of India - Training journalists to adapt to the digital age, including AI through workshops and seminars with industry experts.

All programmes are run by passionate volunteers and entirely focus on helping young people to succeed. Prime Point Foundation proves that dedicated efforts can create lasting change in the Indian democracy and society.

Author's Note

India's journey to becoming a sovereign democratic republic is etched with the supreme sacrifices of millions. While mainstream historical narratives frequently highlight a select group of legendary national figures, the foundational bedrock of our independence struggle was laid by countless regional heroes.

These brave souls fought valiantly in remote corners of our vast nation—in deep forests, rural heartlands, and regional outposts. Over the decades, many of these stories faded into relative obscurity, marginalised as regional folklore or buried deep within dusty archival records.

To bridge this massive historical gap, the eMagazine *PreSense* initiated a dedicated column in 2021 to feature these unsung freedom fighters. This annual compilation, now in its third volume, stands as a humble attempt to bring the lives of 80 such extraordinary patriots back into the national consciousness.

For the present generation, documenting these accounts is of paramount importance. Living in a free, democratic India, our youth must understand that liberty was not achieved overnight; it was earned through immeasurable physical hardship, prolonged imprisonment, brutal torture, and ultimate martyrdom. Learning about regional heroes fosters deep-seated values of patriotism, unity in adversity, and

selfless service, serving as a powerful moral compass in modern times.

This extensive five-year research and publication journey would have been impossible without the institutional backing of the Prime Point Foundation. I extend my profound gratitude to the foundation and specifically to its visionary Founder and Chairman, Shri Prime Point Srinivasan.

His unyielding commitment to public service, community education, and positive digital journalism sparked the initial idea during the nation's *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* celebrations. His constant guidance, timely encouragement, and insistence on distributing these educational books free of charge have been the true driving force behind this venture.

I am equally indebted to our editorial leadership for their exceptional professional support. I express my heartfelt thanks to our Editor-in-Chief, Advocate Priyadharshni Rahul, for her robust coordination, constant motivation, and leadership in expanding the reach of these works.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to Shri Ramesh Sundaram, Joint Managing Editor of *PreSense*, whose rigorous editing, painstaking proofreading, and meticulous compilation skills ensured the historical accuracy and narrative polish of this manuscript. Together, we present this volume to the citizens of India, hoping it inspires

everyone to protect the hard-won freedom of our great motherland.

With deepest gratitude,

C Badri

(Author and Joint Managing Editor, PreSense)

Publisher's Note

As India observes its 80th Independence Day in August 2026, the Prime Point Foundation and the eMagazine *PreSense* take immense pride in releasing this comprehensive volume. This book marks a milestone in our continuous endeavour to chronicle the lives of India's valiant, unsung freedom fighters.

Our mission began in 2021 with a simple yet profound realization: the historical landscape of India's independence struggle is immensely vast, and mainstream texts have inadvertently overlooked numerous regional titans who fought British imperialism decades before the national movements took root.

Tracing the history of this initiative, we have consistently compiled these monthly features into annual volumes to mark our Independence Day celebrations. In 2023, we achieved a significant emotional milestone by releasing our compilation right in front of the historic Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands—the infamous *Kalapani*—in the presence of the family members of freedom fighters, launched by the then Member of Parliament, Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma.

In August 2025, recognising the need to highlight marginalised histories from the northeastern frontier, we compiled a specialised edition titled *Freedom Fighters of North East India*, which was proudly released in Guwahati,

Assam, by the Honourable Chief Minister, Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma.

This current volume represents the compilation of all meticulously researched columns published from September 2024 to August 2026. Bringing our cumulative total to 80 immortalised regional patriots, this publication serves as Volume 3, offering readers a complete, invaluable repository of grassroots resistance stretching across every corner of the subcontinent.

The core objective of the Prime Point Foundation and *PreSense* is to actively generate historical awareness and foster deep-seated civic pride among the modern generation, particularly the youth.

Through our open-access digital model, this book is distributed completely free of cost to educational institutions, libraries, and public forums worldwide. We firmly believe that true patriotism is rooted in remembering the sacrifices of our ancestors. Let us read their stories, absorb their unyielding grit, and pay our highest collective homage to their supreme sacrifices.

I am also grateful to Shri S Narendra, Former Informer Information Advisor to Prime Ministers for sharing his personal experience.

Shri Narendra hails from a freedom fighter's family and married to freedom fighter's family. He has served four Indian Prime Ministers as Information Advisor, including Shri Narasimha Rao and Shri Vajpayee.

Jai Hind!

Prime Point Srinivasan

Founder and Chairman

Prime Point Foundation

www.primepointfoundation.in

Valiant Freedom Fighters of India

Ram Singh Pathania – Himachal Pradesh

Ram Singh Pathania, a teenage Rajput warrior from Himachal Pradesh, led a fierce 1848 guerrilla revolt against the British East India Company before being betrayed and martyred.

India's struggle for independence is replete with tales of unsung heroes who fought valiantly against British colonial rule. Among these remarkable figures is Veer Ram Singh Pathania, a teenage warrior from Himachal Pradesh who led a revolt against the British East India Company long before the more renowned national movements.

Born on 10 April 1824 in the Kangra Valley, Ram Singh Pathania was a Rajput warrior from the Pathania clan. His father, Shyam Singh Pathania, served as the wazir (minister) to King Veer Singh of Nurpur. From an early age, Ram Singh exhibited an indomitable spirit and strong patriotism—traits that would define his rebellion against the British.



Political Landscape and British Expansion

In the early 19th century, the British East India Company was rapidly expanding its influence across India. Following the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-1846), large parts of Himachal Pradesh, including Nurpur, fell under British control. The treaty signed in Lahore on 9 March 1846 placed the region between the Beas and Sutlej rivers under British dominion. After King Veer Singh's death, the British acquired the rights to Nurpur from the minor king, Jaswant Singh, for a mere 5,000 rupees.

Ram Singh Pathania, however, refused to accept this takeover. Allied with the Rajput Katoch clan, he rejected British authority and bribes, remaining resolute despite pressure from neighbouring rulers. His commitment to defending his people's freedom marked him as a leader of great conviction.

The Battle of Shahpur Kandi Fort

On the night of 14 August 1848, Ram Singh Pathania and his small band of Rajput warriors launched a surprise attack on the British garrison at Shahpur Kandi Fort. The British, caught off guard, suffered heavy casualties and were forced to retreat. In a significant symbolic victory, Ram Singh hoisted the flag of the Nurpur princely State atop the fort, declaring the young Jaswant Singh the rightful heir to the Nurpur throne and himself as the wazir of the newly liberated territory.

The British, alarmed by their defeat, quickly mobilised a large force to retake the fort. Despite being vastly outnumbered, Ram Singh and his forces retreated into the hills, waging a guerrilla campaign. His resistance gained support from the local population, with many villagers joining his cause. In Gujarat, nearly 400 villagers took up arms to support him.

Renewed Rebellion and Alliance with King Sher Singh

By 1849, Ram Singh had regrouped and relaunched his rebellion with support from King Sher Singh of Punjab. Sher Singh, recognising the British threat to his own kingdom, sent reinforcements, including 100 cavalry and 500 infantry soldiers.

The British dispatched a formidable force under Brigadier Wheeler to crush the rebellion. The ensuing battle was fierce, with heavy losses on both sides. Ram Singh managed to kill John Peel, the nephew of British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, dealing a significant blow to British morale. His leadership and tactical acumen were evident as he continued to inspire his men despite overwhelming odds.

Betrayal and Capture

Ram Singh's efforts were ultimately betrayed from within. One of his own men, lured by the promise of a reward, revealed his location to the British. While performing his morning rituals on the banks of the Ravi River, Ram Singh was ambushed by British soldiers. Despite being unarmed,

he fought valiantly, killing two soldiers before being captured.

Imprisonment and Martyrdom

Following his capture, Ram Singh was imprisoned first in Kangra and later in Rangoon (modern-day Yangon, Myanmar). Even in captivity, he endured brutal torture but remained steadfast in his loyalty to his homeland. On 11 November 1849, at the young age of 24, Ram Singh Pathania attained martyrdom.

Legacy and Historical Significance

Ram Singh Pathania's death marked the end of his rebellion, but his legacy lived on. The British were deeply shaken by his uprising, recognising the potential for similar revolts to spread. His name became synonymous with valour and resistance, celebrated in the folk songs and stories of Himachal Pradesh.

Despite his significant role in challenging British rule, Ram Singh Pathania's contributions remain largely forgotten in mainstream Indian history. His story, like those of many other regional heroes, has been overshadowed by larger national movements. However, for the people of Himachal Pradesh, he remains a symbol of pride and inspiration—a reminder of the sacrifices made by their ancestors in the fight for freedom.



Ram Singh Pathania's fight against the British East India Company exemplifies the power of individual bravery and leadership in the face of overwhelming odds. His unwavering commitment to the independence of his homeland, even at the cost of his life, is a powerful testament to the spirit of resistance that defined India's long struggle for freedom. Though his story may not be widely known, it deserves to be remembered and honoured as an integral part of India's rich history of rebellion and sacrifice.

(Published in the September 2024 edition of PreSense)

Rao Tula Ram - Haryana

Rao Tula Ram, a royal freedom fighter from Haryana, led the 1857 uprising in Rewari, manufactured weapons, fought fiercely at Nasibpur, and later sought foreign alliances before dying in Afghanistan.



Rao Tula Ram, a valiant leader from Haryana, played a pivotal role in India's First War of Independence in 1857.

Born into the royal family of Rewari on September 9, 1825, Rao Tula Ram is hailed as one of the greatest freedom fighters from Northern India. He spearheaded the revolt against British colonial rule in the Rewari region, galvanizing people into action and standing tall as a symbol of resistance. Although his life was tragically short, his contributions left a lasting impact on India's struggle for freedom. This article delves into the life, legacy, and contributions of Rao Tula Ram, highlighting his brave leadership in the 1857 revolt and the role he played in challenging British imperialism in Northern India.

Rao Tula Ram was born into the ruling family of Rewari, a town situated in modern-day Haryana. His family was respected and influential in the region, and his father, Rao Puran Singh, was known for his administrative acumen and commitment to the welfare of his people. Growing up in such an environment, Tula Ram imbibed the values of leadership, loyalty, and bravery.

From an early age, Rao Tula Ram showed a keen interest in military affairs and governance. He was well-educated and trained in martial arts, a skill that would serve him well in the coming years. His exposure to politics and administration also helped him understand the dynamics of British rule in India and the growing discontent among the people.

By 1857, the simmering resentment against the British had reached a boiling point. Various factors, including economic

exploitation, cultural suppression, and the introduction of new military practices that disrespected Indian traditions, had angered many Indians. The outbreak of the First War of Independence, also known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857, marked a crucial turning point in the country's resistance against British rule.

Rao Tula Ram emerged as a key leader of the rebellion in the Rewari region. He raised an army of around 5,000 soldiers and played a critical role in the revolt against the British forces. Alongside his cousin, Rao Gopal Dev, Tula Ram organized local fighters, farmers, and landowners into a formidable resistance force. His leadership and tactical brilliance became evident as he successfully freed Rewari from British control, turning the region into a center of anti-colonial activities.

During the 1857 uprising, Rao Tula Ram not only defended Rewari but also extended his support to other rebel leaders across Northern India. His army was instrumental in supporting the forces of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and rebel leaders like Bakht Khan and Tatya Tope. One of Rao Tula Ram's key achievements was setting up a foundry in Rewari to manufacture guns and ammunition for the rebel forces. This helped sustain the rebellion in Northern India, where resources were scarce, and the British were trying to crush the movement by cutting off supplies. Under his leadership, Rewari became a key hub for resistance against British forces, and Tula Ram was

admired for his ability to inspire loyalty and maintain order among the rebels.

One of the most notable events in Rao Tula Ram's fight against the British was the Battle of Nasibpur, fought on November 16, 1857. British forces, led by Colonel Gerrard, attempted to reclaim Rewari from Rao Tula Ram's control. Tula Ram and his army engaged the British in a fierce battle near Nasibpur village, not far from Rewari.

Although the battle was intense and both sides suffered heavy casualties, the British forces eventually gained an upper hand, largely due to their superior weaponry and reinforcements. However, the bravery and tenacity of Rao Tula Ram and his soldiers became legendary, and the battle is still remembered for its display of courage. Colonel Gerrard was killed during the battle, a significant blow to the British forces. Despite the setback, Rao Tula Ram continued his fight, refusing to surrender. Understanding the importance of preserving the freedom struggle, he sought alliances with other rebel leaders and planned further resistance.

After the fall of Rewari and the defeat at Nasibpur, Rao Tula Ram realized that he needed external support to continue the fight. He fled to Rajasthan and eventually made his way to Afghanistan. His intention was to seek assistance from the rulers of Afghanistan and Persia, hoping to rally international support against British imperialism in India. Rao Tula Ram's efforts to garner support from foreign

powers reflect his strategic mindset and determination to keep the rebellion alive, even from afar. Though his attempts to forge an alliance were ultimately unsuccessful, he remained a symbol of defiance against the British.

While in Afghanistan, Rao Tula Ram fell ill and tragically passed away on September 23, 1863, at the age of 38. His death marked the end of a short but intense chapter of resistance against British rule in Haryana and Northern India.

Rao Tula Ram's contribution to the Indian freedom struggle remains a source of inspiration, particularly in Haryana and the surrounding regions. He is remembered not only for his bravery in battle but also for his leadership qualities, tactical acumen, and deep commitment to his people. Even in the face of overwhelming odds, he refused to surrender, demonstrating an unyielding spirit that became a hallmark of India's larger freedom movement.

In Haryana, many institutions, roads, and public spaces have been named after Rao Tula Ram in recognition of his role as a freedom fighter. The Rao Tula Ram Memorial is a significant landmark in Rewari, and his life is celebrated annually on his birth anniversary. Educational institutions like Rao Tula Ram College in Delhi honour his legacy by ensuring that future generations remember his contributions.

Rao Tula Ram's life and legacy represent the indomitable spirit of India's struggle for independence. He was a leader

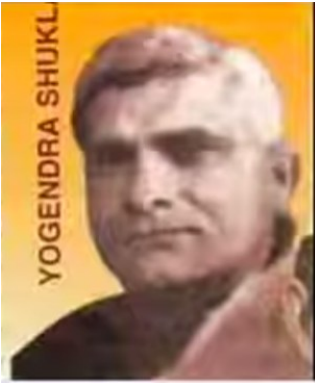
who inspired not just through words but through courageous action. His role in the 1857 rebellion, particularly in Rewari and the surrounding areas, made him a significant figure in the annals of India's freedom struggle.

Though he did not live to see a free India, Rao Tula Ram's sacrifices and bravery laid the groundwork for future generations of freedom fighters. His story is a reminder of the importance of resistance against oppression and the power of leadership in the face of adversity. As India continues to celebrate its freedom fighters, Rao Tula Ram's name will forever be etched in the history of the nation as a revolutionary hero who gave his life for the cause of independence.

(Published in the October 2024 edition fo PreSense)

Yogendra Shukla- Bihar

Yogendra Shukla, an unsung freedom fighter from Bihar, uniquely blended armed resistance with peaceful protests. Despite surviving the brutal Cellular Jail, this resilient revolutionary tragically died in unacknowledged obscurity.



Yogendra Shukla, one of India's lesser known but yet significant freedom fighters, was an indomitable force in the Indian independence struggle. Born on October 29, 1896, in Jalalpur village of Bihar, he dedicated his entire life to the cause of Indian freedom. His journey from an ordinary man in rural Bihar to a revolutionary is inspiring. Despite facing severe hardships, including imprisonment and personal loss, Shukla's resilience remained unwavering. His contribution holds immense significance, particularly in the history of Bihar's involvement in the nationalist movement. Yogendra Shukla is a revolutionary who walked alongside some of the giants of Indian freedom but whose story is seldom told.

Yogendra Shukla hailed from a Brahmin family in the small village of Jalalpur, located in Muzaffarpur district (now

Vaishali). Growing up in a region with rising nationalist sentiment, young Shukla was influenced by the fervour for freedom that began to take root in the early 20th century. Shukla's education gave him a deep understanding of Indian history and British exploitation, shaping his desire to fight against colonial rule. His nationalist ideals were further cemented by the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and the revolutionary fervour of organizations such as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Like many of his contemporaries, Shukla saw both non-violent resistance and armed rebellion as legitimate methods of overthrowing British rule.

Yogendra Shukla was closely associated with revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Batukeshwar Dutt. In the 1920s, the HSRA was actively engaged in organizing armed resistance and protests against British authorities. Shukla joined this movement, becoming one of its prominent members in Bihar. He travelled across the State, establishing underground networks, collecting arms, and raising funds to support revolutionary activities. His involvement in several secret revolutionary activities led to constant surveillance by the British police. Shukla believed that armed resistance was necessary to shake the British Empire and awaken the masses to fight for independence. His life took a turning point when he got actively involved in attempts to liberate political prisoners and participated in various uprisings across Bihar.

While Yogendra Shukla was known for his revolutionary zeal, he also participated in Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March in 1930. This shows the duality of his approach — while he supported armed resistance, he was also willing to engage in peaceful, non-violent protests to challenge British authority. As part of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Shukla took part in mass protests, boycott of British goods, and defiance of colonial laws. His role in organizing rural uprisings and protests in Bihar was critical. He travelled across villages, urging the peasantry to resist British-imposed taxes and take part in the movement. His speeches inspired many villagers, turning them into active participants in the independence struggle.

Due to his deep involvement in revolutionary activities, Shukla was arrested several times. One of the most harrowing periods of his life was his imprisonment in the Cellular Jail at Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Cellular Jail, also known as Kalapani, was infamous for its brutal treatment of political prisoners. Many freedom fighters sent there were subjected to inhumane conditions, physical torture, and solitary confinement. Shukla spent nearly six years in the Cellular Jail, enduring immense hardship but refusing to compromise his ideals. His health deteriorated severely during his incarceration, but his spirit remained undeterred. His release was only granted after sustained pressure from the Indian National Congress and public outrage over the harsh treatment of political prisoners.

Even after enduring the horrors of Kalapani, Yogendra Shukla continued his involvement in the freedom struggle. When the Quit India Movement was launched in 1942, Shukla was at the forefront of organizing protests in Bihar. This movement called for the immediate withdrawal of British rule from India, and the British responded with mass arrests and violent suppression. Despite being constantly targeted by the authorities, Shukla played a pivotal role in mobilizing students, peasants, and workers for the movement. His relentless efforts in the Quit India Movement led to yet another spell of imprisonment.

Yogendra Shukla's life after independence was marked by personal hardship. Unlike many other freedom fighters who entered politics or were honoured with titles and positions, Shukla chose to live a simple and humble life. He did not seek recognition or power for his role in the freedom movement. Unfortunately, post-independence India did not acknowledge his contributions adequately. Shukla lived in near anonymity and financial difficulties, relying on a meagre pension and the support of well-wishers. His health deteriorated due to the years of torture and imprisonment, and he passed away in 1960 without much public recognition.

Though Yogendra Shukla's name might not be as well-known as other freedom fighters, his contributions to the revolutionary movement and nationalist struggle were immense. In Bihar, he remains a local hero, with schools

and institutions named after him. Scholars and historians have acknowledged his critical role in building the revolutionary network in Bihar and his participation in both armed and non-violent resistance movements. Today, efforts are being made to revive his legacy and bring his story to the forefront. His life serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by countless unsung heroes in India's struggle for freedom. The government and academic circles are gradually recognizing his contributions, but his story still awaits the recognition it truly deserves on a national level.

Yogendra Shukla's life is a testament to courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the cause of India's freedom. He symbolizes the spirit of Bihar's contribution to the freedom struggle, embodying both revolutionary zeal and the Gandhian ideals of non-violence. His ability to straddle both armed resistance and peaceful protest makes him a unique figure in India's nationalist history. Despite facing imprisonment, torture, and personal hardships, Shukla remained devoted to his ideals. His life after independence, marked by anonymity and hardship, reflects the plight of many unsung freedom fighters who sacrificed everything for the nation but received little in return.

It is essential to honour the memory of Yogendra Shukla and other such unsung heroes by recognizing their contributions and ensuring that their stories are passed on to future generations.

Their sacrifices laid the foundation of the free and democratic India we enjoy today and remembering them is not just an act of gratitude but a moral responsibility.

(Published in the December 2024 edition of PreSense)

Tantia Bhil – Madhya Pradesh

Tantia Bhil, a tribal leader from Madhya Pradesh, fought against British oppression with guerrilla tactics. His legacy as a freedom fighter deserves greater recognition in India's history.

In the annals of India's struggle for independence, countless heroes fought against the British colonial rulers with unmatched courage and determination. Among them was Sri Tantia Bhil, a tribal leader from Madhya Pradesh, whose valiant efforts to resist British oppression made him a symbol of defiance and hope for his people. Despite his significant contributions, Tantia Bhil's story remains largely forgotten, overshadowed by more prominent names in the freedom movement. This article aims to shed light on the life and legacy of this unsung hero, whose fight against injustice deserves to be remembered and celebrated.

Tantia Bhil was born in the latter half of the 19th century into the Bhil community, an Indigenous tribe in the region now known as Madhya Pradesh. The Bhils, known for their intimate connection with nature and warrior spirit, had historically resisted external domination. Tantia grew up witnessing the hardships faced by his people, who were subjected to severe exploitation under British rule and by local landlords.

The British administration's policies of heavy taxation, land confiscation, and forced labor disrupted the traditional tribal way of life. The Bhils, who relied on agriculture and forest resources, found their livelihoods increasingly threatened. Tantia's awareness of these injustices sparked a fire in him to challenge the oppressive systems.



Tantia Bhil's journey as a revolutionary began in the 1870s, as he organized the Bhil community to resist British authority. His leadership was characterized by a deep understanding of the terrain, which he used to his advantage in planning guerrilla-style attacks. Tantia became a thorn in the side of the British, leading a series of raids on government treasuries, police outposts, and wealthy landlords who collaborated with the colonizers.

Often referred to as the “Robin Hood of Central India,” Tantia Bhil redistributed wealth from the oppressive landlords and colonial coffers to the impoverished tribal population. His acts of defiance earned him immense respect and admiration among his people, who saw him as their saviour and protector.

The British were quick to recognize the threat posed by Tantia Bhil and launched a series of campaigns to capture him. However, his intimate knowledge of the forests and hills of the region enabled him to evade arrest for years. Tantia's ability to rally his community and inspire them to stand against the colonial rulers made him a formidable adversary.

The British administration labelled Tantia a “dacoit” to discredit him and justify their harsh actions against him and his followers. However, for the tribal people, he was a hero fighting for their rights and dignity. Tantia's resistance was not just against economic exploitation but also against the cultural and social erosion of tribal identity under British rule.

Despite his courage and strategic brilliance, Tantia Bhil's resistance came to a tragic end. Betrayed by an informant, he was captured by the British in 1889. Following a swift and biased trial, he was sentenced to death. On December 4, 1889, Tantia Bhil was hanged in Jubbulpore (present-day Jabalpur), bringing an end to his short but impactful life.

Tantia's execution was intended to serve as a warning to others who might dare to resist British rule. However, his sacrifice only strengthened the resolve of his people to continue the fight for their freedom. His martyrdom became a source of inspiration for future generations of freedom fighters in Madhya Pradesh and beyond.

Tantia Bhil's legacy is deeply embedded in the collective memory of the tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. He remains a symbol of resistance and resilience, representing the spirit of India's Indigenous population. However, his contributions have largely been overlooked in mainstream historical narratives.

In recent years, efforts have been made to revive the memory of Tantia Bhil and honour his contributions. Several tribal organizations and local governments in Madhya Pradesh have organized events and programs to commemorate his life and sacrifices. Statues and memorials have been erected in his honour, and his name is increasingly being included in discussions about India's freedom struggle.

The story of Tantia Bhil highlights the critical role played by tribal communities in India's fight for independence. These communities, often marginalised and overlooked, were among the first to resist colonial rule and bear the brunt of its oppressive policies. By remembering Tantia Bhil and his contributions, we not only honour his memory but also acknowledge the sacrifices of countless others like him.

Tantia's fight against the British was not just a struggle for political freedom but also a fight for the survival of his people's culture, traditions, and way of life. His story serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving and respecting the diverse identities that make up the fabric of India.

Sri Tania Bhil was a freedom fighter whose life and legacy deserve greater recognition in the history of India's struggle for independence. His courage, leadership, and commitment to justice exemplify the spirit of resistance that defined the freedom movement.

As we celebrate the contributions of India's more well-known freedom fighters, let us also take a moment to honour heroes like Tania Bhil, who fought valiantly against oppression and paid the ultimate price for their beliefs. By remembering their stories, we ensure that their sacrifices are not forgotten and that their ideals continue to inspire future generations.

Let the name of Tania Bhil echo as a symbol of resilience and hope, reminding us of the indomitable spirit of those who dared to stand against injustice, no matter how great the odds.

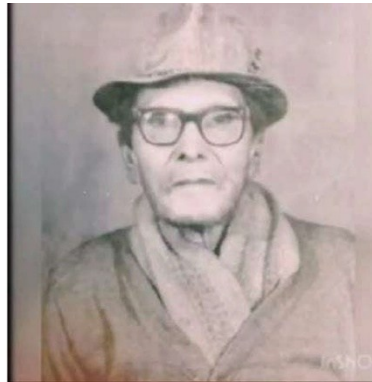
(Published in the January 2025 edition of PreSense)

Bachan Ram Gairola - Uttarakhand

Bachan Ram Gairola, an unsung freedom fighter from Uttarakhand, actively participated in the Civil Disobedience and Quit India movements, enduring imprisonment while inspiring many in India's independence struggle.

India's struggle for independence is adorned with the tales of countless valiant heroes whose contributions have been etched in the annals of history.

Among them, however, are some unsung champions whose stories have faded into obscurity over time. One such hero is Bachan Ram Gairola, a freedom fighter from Uttarakhand, whose invaluable contributions to India's independence



movement deserve recognition and remembrance.

Bachan Ram Gairola was born in the picturesque village of Pethsain in the district of Chamoli, Uttarakhand, a region known for its rugged mountains and resilient people. His early life was shaped by the influences of his rural surroundings, where he witnessed the hardships faced by

the common folk under British rule. Despite the challenges, young Bachan Ram was determined to receive an education. His perseverance led him to pursue his studies, where he excelled and developed a profound sense of Inspiration and Involvement in the Freedom Movement.

The early 20th century was a period of great turmoil and unrest in India. The oppressive policies of the British government, coupled with widespread poverty and exploitation, prompted a wave of resistance across the country. Inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the principles of non-violent resistance, Bachan Ram Gairola joined the burgeoning freedom movement. His resolve to contribute to the fight for independence was further strengthened by the stories of sacrifice and bravery he heard from fellow freedom fighters.

Bachan Ram Gairola's involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement was marked by his unwavering commitment to the cause. He participated in various protests and demonstrations, advocating for the rights of the oppressed and demanding an end to British rule. His efforts did not go unnoticed, and he quickly became a prominent figure in the movement within his region. Gairola's leadership qualities and ability to mobilize people made him an indispensable asset to the freedom struggle.

As his influence grew, so did the British authorities' attempt to suppress his activities. Bachan Ram Gairola faced multiple arrests and endured harsh imprisonment for his

role in organizing protests and defying colonial laws. Despite the physical and mental hardships of incarceration, Gairola remained resolute in his commitment to the cause. His time in prison only strengthened his resolve, and he continued to inspire others even from behind bars.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 marked a crucial phase in India's fight for freedom. Bachan Ram Gairola played a significant role in this movement, leading protests and encouraging mass participation in acts of civil disobedience. His efforts were instrumental in rallying the people of Uttarakhand to join the nationwide call for immediate independence from British rule.

Gairola's dedication and tireless work during this period earned him the respect and admiration of his peers and fellow freedom fighters. With India's hard-won independence in 1947, the focus shifted to nation-building and addressing the challenges of a newly sovereign State. Bachan Ram Gairola continued to serve his country with the same passion and dedication that had driven him during the freedom struggle. He took on various roles in the local administration, working to improve the lives of the people in Uttarakhand. Gairola's efforts in promoting education, healthcare, and social welfare were a testament to his unwavering commitment to the betterment of society.

Despite his significant contributions to India's independence movement, Bachan Ram Gairola's name remains relatively unknown in the broader narrative of

Indian history. His story, like those of many other unsung heroes, serves as a reminder of the countless individuals who sacrificed their lives and livelihoods for the dream of a free India. Gairola's legacy lives on in the hearts of the people of Uttarakhand, where his contributions are remembered and celebrated.

In recent years, there have been concerted efforts to revive the memory of Bachan Ram Gairola and other forgotten freedom fighters. Scholars, historians, and local organizations have undertaken initiatives to document his life and contributions, ensuring that future generations recognize and honour his sacrifices. Commemorative events, publications, and educational programs have been launched to shed light on Gairola's role in the independence movement.

The story of Bachan Ram Gairola underscores the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of all individuals who played a role in India's struggle for independence. While prominent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose are rightfully celebrated, it is equally crucial to recognize the efforts of the countless others who fought bravely, often in obscurity, for the same cause. Their stories enrich our understanding of history and inspire us to value the principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

Bachan Ram Gairola's life and legacy are a testament to the spirit of resilience and determination that characterized

India's fight for independence. As we continue to celebrate the milestones of our nation's history, let us remember and honour the contributions of this remarkable freedom fighter from Uttarakhand. By doing so, we ensure that the sacrifices of Bachan Ram Gairola and countless other unsung heroes are never forgotten, and their legacy continues to inspire future generations.

(Published in the February 2025 edition of PreSense)

Buxi Jagabandhu - Odisha

Buxi Jagabandhu led the 1817 Paika Rebellion, an early fight against British rule, earning him recognition as Odisha's first independence hero.



Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mohapatra Bhramarbar Ray, popularly known as Buxi Jagabandhu, was a prominent freedom fighter from Odisha who played a pivotal role in the Paika Rebellion of 1817. Born around 1773 in Rodanga, near Khurda, Odisha, he rose from a zamindar family to become the Commander-in-Chief of the Khurda Kingdom's forces. His leadership in the rebellion against British colonial rule has earned him a distinguished place in India's struggle for independence.

India's struggle for independence was a nationwide movement, with valiant freedom fighters emerging from every corner of the subcontinent, uniting in their quest to overthrow British colonial rule. In the north, leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Chandra Shekhar Azad galvanized the masses with their unwavering commitment to the cause. Moving eastward, figures such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Khudiram Bose played pivotal roles in inspiring revolutionary activities. To the south, leaders like

Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Subramania Bharati championed the fight against British oppression. In the West, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Lala Lajpat Rai were instrumental in mobilizing support for the independence movement. This widespread participation from all regions of India not only strengthened the nationalistic fervour, but also showcased the unity and diversity of the Indian populace in their collective struggle for freedom.

Jagabandhu hailed from a lineage that held the title 'Buxi,' signifying the rank of Commander in the Khurda Kingdom's military. His family was granted extensive lands, including the estate of Killa Roranga, by the Gajapati rulers of Khurda. This hereditary position not only bestowed him with significant military authority but also with substantial landholdings, making him a person of considerable influence in the region.

The Paika Rebellion of 1817, often regarded as one of the earliest armed uprisings against British rule, was primarily a response to the exploitative policies imposed by the East India Company. The Company's annexation of Odisha in 1803 led to the dethronement of the local Gajapati king, Mukunda Deva II, and the imposition of policies that severely affected the Paikas—traditional warrior-peasants who served the Khurda Kingdom. The British administration's decision to confiscate the hereditary rent-free lands of the Paikas, including those of Jagabandhu, and replace the indigenous cowrie currency with silver-

based taxation, caused widespread discontent. Additionally, the rise in salt prices due to increased taxation further exacerbated the situation.

In March 1817, Jagabandhu, along with a group of 400 Kandhas (tribal warriors) from the neighbouring Ghumusar region, initiated the rebellion by attacking British establishments in Banpur. They looted and set fire to the police station and post office and subsequently marched toward Khurda, capturing it and declaring it free from British rule. The rebellion quickly gained momentum, with support pouring from various quarters, including zamindars and common folk. The Paikas, under Jagabandhu's leadership, effectively utilized guerrilla warfare tactics, leveraging their intimate knowledge of the terrain.

The East India Company, taken aback by the scale and intensity of the uprising, mobilized forces to suppress the rebellion. The Company's forces, led by Lieutenant Prideaure and Lieutenant Faris, initially faced stiff resistance from the Paikas, suffering significant casualties. However, the British forces gradually regained control, retaking Khurda and imposing martial law. Despite this, Jagabandhu and his followers continued their resistance, retreating into the dense forests of Ghumusar and employing guerrilla tactics.

The Paika Rebellion of 1817, though ultimately suppressed, is considered a precursor to India's broader struggle for independence. Buxi Jagabandhu's leadership and valour

have earned him the epithet of the "First Rebel" against British rule. In recognition of his contributions, the Odisha government has proposed acknowledging the rebellion as the first war of independence, predating the 1857 revolt. However, this perspective has not been universally accepted, with some historians and officials attributing the title to the later uprising.

Despite the passage of time, Buxi Jagabandhu's legacy remains a source of pride for the people of Odisha. His unwavering commitment to preserving the region's autonomy and culture continues to inspire generations. Educational institutions, such as the Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar College in Bhubaneswar, stand as testaments to his enduring influence.

Buxi Jagabandhu's role in the Paika Rebellion of 1817 highlights the deep-seated resistance against colonial oppression in India's heartland. His leadership challenged the British Empire's expansionist ambitions and fostered a sense of unity and national consciousness among the people. Recognizing and honouring such figures is essential to understanding the multifaceted history of India's freedom struggle.

(Published in the March 2025 edition of PreSense)

Pratap Singh Barhath - Rajasthan

Pratap Singh Barhath, a young Rajasthani revolutionary, bravely resisted British rule through armed struggle, enduring torture and dying in prison, symbolising sacrifice for India's independence.



Kunwar Pratap Singh Barhath, born on 25th May 1893 in Udaipur, Rajasthan, was a valiant freedom fighter whose life exemplified courage and sacrifice in the face of British colonial rule. With its rich history of valour and tradition, Rajasthan has been the birthplace of many freedom fighters who played pivotal roles in India's struggle for independence.

Right from Jaisalmer's vast deserts to Jaipur's vibrant streets, the spirit of defiance against colonial oppression was alive and strong. Pratap Singh, hailing from the noble Barhath family of Shahpura State, was the son of Thakur Kesari Singh Barhath and Manik Kanwar.

Pratap Singh spent much of his early life in Kota, where his father held esteemed positions as Chief Counsellor to the Maharana of Mewar and later as a member of the Council

in the court of the Maharaja of Kota. It was in Kota, that he received his early education at Herbert High School, followed by DAV High School in Ajmer. The nationalist fervour of the time deeply influenced him, and he soon came under the influence of Rash Behari Bose, a prominent leader in the Revolutionary Party. Recognising Pratap Singh's potential, Bose inducted him into the revolutionary cause, setting the stage for his active participation in the freedom struggle.

Pratap Singh's commitment to the cause of independence soon became evident through his active participation in several covert operations against the British authorities. One of the most notable incidents occurred in December 1912 when Pratap Singh, alongside his uncle Thakur Zorawar Singh Barhath, attempted to assassinate Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, during a procession in Delhi. Although the attempt failed, it marked a significant moment in the resistance against British colonial rule, highlighting the growing unrest among Indians willing to risk their lives for independence.

In 1915, Pratap Singh played a leading role in the Benaras Conspiracy, a major plot within the broader Ghadar Movement, which sought to overthrow British rule through armed rebellion. The conspiracy aimed to incite a rebellion by targeting British officials, with Sir Reginald Craddock being a key target. However, the plan was foiled due to

timely intelligence, resulting in the arrest of several revolutionaries, including Pratap Singh.

Although the Benaras Conspiracy did not succeed in its immediate objective, it was emblematic of the fervour and desperation of the revolutionaries. The Ghadar Movement, to which the conspiracy was linked, sought India's freedom through violent insurrection. The movement was marked by the idealism and determination of its leaders, but it also faced significant challenges, such as intelligence leaks, lack of coordination, and internal divisions. Despite the failure of the Benaras Conspiracy, it represented the resilience and resolve of the Indian people in their quest for freedom.

As a result of his involvement in the Benaras Conspiracy, Pratap Singh was arrested and sentenced to five years of rigorous imprisonment in February 1916. He was sent to Bareilly Central Jail, where he endured severe physical and mental torture. The British authorities tried relentlessly to extract information about his fellow revolutionaries, but Pratap Singh remained resolute. Despite the brutal treatment, he refused to betray his comrades, displaying extraordinary courage and unshakable loyalty to the cause.

His strength of character and determination, however, came at a great personal cost. Pratap Singh Barhath died on 7th May 1918 at the tender age of 25, succumbing to the inhumane conditions in prison. His death marked the loss of a young patriot who had sacrificed his life for the freedom of his country. Pratap Singh Barhath's life is a symbol of

sacrifice, resilience, and unwavering dedication to the cause of Indian independence. Though his life was cut short, his actions, alongside those of countless other unsung heroes, contributed significantly to the eventual achievement of independence in 1947. His commitment to the cause of freedom continues to inspire future generations, urging them to uphold the values of patriotism, selflessness, and courage.

In Rajasthan's history, Pratap Singh Barhath is remembered as one of the State's proudest sons—a symbol of courage in the face of colonial oppression. His legacy reminds us of the sacrifices made by individuals whose names may not always be widely recognised but whose contributions were invaluable in securing India's freedom. The stories of such martyrs are integral to our understanding of India's struggle for independence, and they must continue to be honoured and remembered. As we reflect on Pratap Singh's life and sacrifices, we are reminded of the importance of standing up for justice and freedom, even in the face of overwhelming adversity. His bravery and dedication are a powerful testament to the enduring spirit of India's freedom struggle.

(Published in the April 2025 edition of PreSense)

Gunda Dhur – Chhattisgarh

Gunda Dhur, a tribal leader from Bastar, led the 1910 Bhumkal Rebellion against British rule, symbolising grassroots resistance and inspiring tribal pride and historical recognition.



India's freedom struggle is replete with stories of courage, sacrifice, and indomitable spirit. While national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Bhagat Singh are etched in the consciousness of every Indian, there exist several lesser-known heroes who laid the foundation for resistance in remote corners of the country. One valiant freedom fighter was Gunda Dhur, a tribal leader from Bastar in present-day Chhattisgarh. Though history may have largely overlooked his contributions, his legacy inspires tribal communities and historians alike.

Gunda Dhur was born in the early 20th century in the tribal-dominated region of Nethanar village in the Bastar district, which was then part of the princely State of Bastar under

British indirect rule. He belonged to the Maria tribe, an indigenous Adivasi community known for their strong ties to nature and egalitarian social structures.

During Gunda Dhur's time, Bastar was a largely forested area with rich mineral resources. The indigenous communities lived in relative harmony with nature and followed their own cultural and social systems. However, the British colonial administration and the local princely rulers increasingly encroached upon their autonomy by introducing forest laws, levying taxes, and curbing traditional rights such as shifting cultivation and access to forest produce.

The culmination of this discontent was the Bhumkal Rebellion of 1910, one of the earliest tribal uprisings against British rule in central India. The term "Bhumkal" is derived from the local dialect and means "earthquake"—a fitting metaphor for the seismic impact the rebellion had on the region.

The immediate trigger for the uprising was the resentment against land alienation, forest laws, and the interference of the British and princely state authorities in the traditional governance and livelihoods of the tribals. The rebellion was spearheaded by Darbha Gaon's Raja Gundadthur, often confused with Gunda Dhur. However, Gunda Dhur, the tribal leader from Nethanar, emerged as the true leader of the people's revolt, galvanising support from hundreds of villages.

Gunda Dhur's role was crucial. He is said to have mobilised tribal youth, spread awareness among villages about the exploitative practices of the colonial authorities, and organised attacks on symbols of British power. Under his leadership, the rebels attacked police stations, looted grain stocks and weapons, and set fire to government buildings, effectively shaking the colonial administration in Bastar.

What set this rebellion apart was its scale and coordination. Over 47 outposts were attacked, and for a brief period, the rebels managed to disrupt the British control over a large part of the Bastar region.

The rebellion was eventually crushed with brutal force. British forces, along with loyalist troops of the Bastar princely state, launched a crackdown. Several leaders were arrested and executed. However, Gunda Dhur managed to escape capture. His later life remains shrouded in mystery, and it is widely believed that he retreated deep into the forests, evading the colonial authorities.

Although the rebellion did not achieve immediate political independence, it was significant in that it challenged British imperial authority at a time when the national movement had not yet gained widespread momentum. It also asserted tribal identity and resistance, laying the groundwork for future movements focused on tribal rights and autonomy.

Gunda Dhur's contribution is increasingly being recognised today as part of India's larger freedom movement, particularly in highlighting the participation of tribal

communities, whose sacrifices have often been marginalised in mainstream historical narratives.

Despite his important role in India's struggle for freedom, Gunda Dhur remained a forgotten figure for decades. In recent years, however, efforts have been made to honour his legacy and bring his story to the fore. In the district headquarters of Jagdalpur, a memorial has been erected in honour of Gunda Dhur. It serves not just as a physical reminder of his contribution but also as an educational site for locals and tourists interested in the history of tribal resistance. Statues of Gunda Dhur have been installed in various parts of Bastar, especially in Nethanar village, where he was born. These are often sites of local commemorations, especially during Tribal Freedom Fighters Day and other regional events. Several government programmes, schools, and public spaces in Chhattisgarh have been named after Gunda Dhur in recent years.

This includes Gunda Dhur Government College and health centres, acknowledging his status as a local hero. The Chhattisgarh State Education Board has taken steps to include the story of Gunda Dhur and the Bhumkal Rebellion in history textbooks, ensuring that future generations learn about this important chapter in India's freedom struggle. The Bhumkal festival is celebrated every year in Bastar. The Bhumkal Festival commemorates the 1910 rebellion

and prominently features tributes to Gunda Dhur. It is a colourful celebration of tribal heritage and resistance.

Gunda Dhur's life stands as a symbol of grassroots resistance against exploitation, injustice, and foreign rule. While he may not have enjoyed the national limelight like other leaders of the freedom movement, his courage and leadership in the face of colonial oppression make him a true patriot. In an era where the contributions of marginalised communities are being re-evaluated and honoured, Gunda Dhur's story is finally being given the place it deserves in the annals of Indian history. His life is a powerful reminder that the fight for freedom was not limited to urban centres or elite leadership—it was, at its core, a people's movement, fought in forests, villages, and fields across the length and breadth of India.

(Published in the May 2025 edition of PreSense)

Matu Ram Huda - Haryana

Matu Ram Huda, a freedom fighter from Haryana, mobilised rural masses, led farmers' movements, and championed education and justice during and after India's independence struggle.



Matu Ram Huda, a prominent freedom fighter from Haryana, holds a significant place in India's struggle for independence. He hailed from the Rohtak district of Haryana and is remembered for his active participation in the national movement, his relentless efforts to unite people, and his sacrifices for the cause of a free India. Huda's contributions extended beyond mere participation in protests or movements; he worked tirelessly to inspire his fellow countrymen, particularly in the rural heartlands of Haryana, to rise against British colonial rule.

Matu Ram Huda was born in 1889 in a small village named Sanghi in the Rohtak district of Haryana. His family

belonged to the Jat community, which was primarily agrarian. Growing up in a rural environment, Matu Ram was deeply connected to the land and the people of his region. His upbringing was rooted in the simple values of honesty, hard work, and social justice, which later shaped his commitment to the freedom struggle.

Huda's early life coincided with a period of growing unrest in India, as the British had tightened their control over the country. Like many young Indians of his time, Matu Ram Huda was inspired by the early freedom fighters, particularly Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Lala Lajpat Rai. The ideas of Swaraj (self-rule), non-cooperation, and civil disobedience resonated with him deeply. Seeing the poverty and exploitation faced by his fellow villagers, Huda was driven to fight for the rights and freedom of his people.

Matu Ram Huda's entry into the freedom movement was marked by his involvement in various protests and agitations against British rule. During the early 20th century, Haryana, like many parts of India, witnessed the rise of nationalist sentiments. Huda played a crucial role in organising the rural masses, particularly the farmers and labourers, who had been largely ignored by the nationalist leadership at that time.

One of Huda's significant contributions was his involvement in the Non-Cooperation Movement, launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. The movement called for the rejection of

British goods, institutions, and titles, urging Indians to rely on their resources. Huda's leadership was instrumental in mobilising the rural population of Haryana, particularly the farmers, to boycott British products and promote the use of Swadeshi goods. He worked tirelessly to spread awareness about the harmful effects of British economic policies on the Indian agrarian community, and his efforts significantly contributed to the movement's success in Haryana.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, launched in 1930, was another milestone in Matu Ram Huda's journey as a freedom fighter. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha, Huda organised protests against the salt tax and other unjust policies imposed by the British government. He encouraged people to peacefully disobey the British laws, highlighting the importance of non-violent resistance.

Huda's leadership during this time was marked by his ability to bring together people from different communities, castes, and regions under the common cause of freedom. He believed that unity among the oppressed was crucial for the success of the freedom movement. His efforts in organising marches, protests, and public meetings in Haryana were instrumental in building momentum for the Civil Disobedience Movement in the region.

Huda also faced arrests and imprisonment for his participation in these movements. The British authorities saw him as a significant threat, particularly because of his

influence over the rural masses. However, imprisonment did not deter him; instead, it strengthened his resolve to fight for India's independence.

Apart from his role in the national movement, Matu Ram Huda was also a champion of farmers' rights. Haryana, being an agrarian region, was heavily dependent on agriculture, and the farmers faced numerous challenges under British rule, including high taxes, exploitation by landlords, and lack of access to modern farming techniques.

Huda actively worked towards improving the conditions of farmers in Haryana. He led several movements and protests against the unjust taxation policies imposed by the British on farmers. His advocacy for the rights of farmers earned him widespread support in the rural areas, and he became a key figure in the agrarian movements of the time.

Huda's efforts in improving the lives of farmers were not limited to protests. He also worked to educate farmers about their rights and encouraged them to adopt modern farming practices to improve their yields. His focus on empowering the agrarian community made him a beloved figure among the farmers of Haryana.

India gained its independence in 1947, a moment of triumph for freedom fighters like Matu Ram Huda. However, Huda's work did not end with the attainment of freedom. In the post-independence period, he continued to work for the welfare

of the people, particularly focusing on the development of rural Haryana.

Huda was a firm believer in the power of education to uplift society. After independence, he focused on improving educational facilities in Haryana, advocating for the establishment of schools and colleges in rural areas. His vision was to empower the younger generation through education, enabling them to contribute to the progress of the nation.

Huda's contributions to the freedom movement and his post-independence work for social welfare left a lasting impact on Haryana. He remains a revered figure in the State, particularly among the farming community, for his tireless efforts to uplift the rural population and fight for their rights.

Matu Ram Huda's life is a testament to the courage, determination, and resilience of the Indian freedom fighters who fought against British colonial rule. His contributions to the freedom movement, particularly in mobilising the rural masses of Haryana, played a significant role in the larger struggle for India's independence.

Huda's legacy as a freedom fighter and a champion of farmers' rights continues to inspire future generations.

As we celebrate the heroes of India's freedom struggle, it is essential to remember the contributions of leaders like Matu Ram Huda, who fought not only for political freedom but also for the social and economic upliftment of the people. His life and work remain a beacon of hope and inspiration for all those who strive for justice, equality, and freedom.

(Published in the June 2025 edition of PreSense)

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury - Assam

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, an influential Assamese poet and freedom fighter, used literature and activism to resist British colonialism and advocate for Assamese culture, justice, and independence.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury stands as one of Assam's most revered sons, a beacon of resistance against British



colonial rule in India. Known for his fiery patriotism, literary prowess, and relentless advocacy for the rights of his people, Raichoudhury's life and legacy stretch far beyond the boundaries of Assam, resonating across the vast narrative of India's struggle for independence. To understand the journey of this freedom fighter

is to delve into the heart of Assam's awakening and the broader Indian nationalist movement.

Born on December 18, 1885, in Barpeta, a culturally vibrant town in Assam, Ambikagiri Raichoudhury was shaped by the rich traditions of his homeland and the simmering discontent against colonial subjugation. Raised in a family that valued education and cultural heritage, young Ambikagiri was exposed to traditional Assamese literature and music, which became a lifelong passion and a tool in his fight for India's freedom.

His early education at Barpeta and later at Guwahati brought him in contact with like-minded individuals and the nascent nationalist ideas circulating in British-ruled India. He was deeply inspired by the writings of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and the revolutionary fervour sweeping Bengal, as well as by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for nonviolent resistance.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's role as a freedom fighter was intricately connected to his identity as a poet, lyricist, and dramatist. He used his pen as a weapon, composing stirring verses that awakened the Assamese populace to the injustices of British rule and the urgent need for self-determination. His poetry, essays, and songs became rallying cries for unity and resistance.

Among his most influential literary contributions was the establishment of the monthly magazine *Assam Bandhu* in 1909, a platform that provided space for nationalist discourse, cultural revival, and critiques of colonial policies. Through his writings, Raichoudhury sought to inspire pride

in Assamese identity and mobilise support for the freedom movement. His poetic works, such as “Tumi Dangor Nohou,” “Mukuta,” and collections like *Deka Asomiya*, combined patriotism with lyrical beauty, reinforcing the idea that literature could be a catalyst for revolution.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury’s activism reached its zenith during the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements of the 1920s and 1930s. He was at the forefront of protests against British policies that marginalised Assamese culture, language, and economy. As an ardent Gandhian, he advocated for *swadeshi*, promoting indigenous industries and boycotting British goods as a form of economic resistance.

His commitment to the cause saw him arrested multiple times. In 1921, during the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement, Raichoudhury was imprisoned for his seditious writings and activities. Unfazed by adversity, he used his time in jail to compose songs and poems that galvanised his fellow prisoners and inspired a new generation of freedom fighters. His leadership extended to organising grassroots movements in rural Assam, mobilising peasants, students, and intellectuals alike in the fight for justice.

Raichoudhury’s patriotism was inseparable from his advocacy for the Assamese people’s cultural and economic rights. He was a staunch defender of the Assamese language and worked tirelessly to preserve and promote it

as a symbol of regional pride. Alarmed by the cultural erosion caused by colonial policies and the influx of migrants threatening Assamese identity, he championed the cause of indigenous rights and regional autonomy.

As president of the Asam Sahitya Sabha in 1950, he was instrumental in shaping literary and linguistic policies that upheld Assamese culture. He also played a vital role in establishing educational institutions, libraries, and organisations dedicated to the upliftment of Assam's youth.

Beyond nationalism, Raichoudhury was a social reformer. He advocated for the abolition of entrenched social evils and worked to eradicate caste discrimination, promote women's education, and improve the lives of the marginalised. His vision of freedom encompassed not just political independence but also social justice and human dignity.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's opposition to British rule was multidimensional. He condemned exploitative economic policies that impoverished Assam and stripped it of natural resources. He criticised administrative measures that sidelined Assamese participation in governance. Through his impassioned speeches, articles, and activism, he demanded self-rule, equitable development, and respect for indigenous culture.

The colonial authorities viewed Raichoudhury as a persistent threat. Surveillance, censorship, and repeated incarcerations marked his life. Yet, the attempts to silence

him only strengthened his resolve. His fearless dissent inspired countless others to join the freedom struggle, making him a central figure in Assam's resistance to imperial domination.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury passed away on January 2, 1967, but his spirit endures in Assam's cultural and political consciousness. He is remembered as the "Bard of Assam," whose poems and songs remain on the lips of generation after generation. His life's work laid the foundation for the assertion of Assamese identity and the ongoing quest for social and cultural justice.

Institutions, awards, and celebrations in his name—such as the Ambikagiri Raichoudhury Award for literary excellence—testify to his lasting impact. His writings are studied in schools, his songs sung at gatherings, and his example invoked whenever the rights of the Assamese people are at stake.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's life was a symphony of courage, creativity, and unwavering devotion to justice. As a poet, patriot, and reformer, he not only opposed the British in India but also envisioned a society built on equality, dignity, and pride in one's heritage. His story reminds us that the struggle for freedom is both a collective endeavour and a deeply personal journey, etched in the heartbeats of those who dare to dream of a better tomorrow.

In celebrating Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, we honour not just a freedom fighter from Assam but a universal champion of the human spirit and resilience.

(Published in the July 2025 edition of PreSense)

Trikendrajit Singh - Manipur

Trikendrajit Singh, the “Lion of Manipur,” led resistance against British colonial rule in the Anglo-Manipur War, sacrificing his life for Manipur’s sovereignty and independence.



In the tapestry of India’s struggle for independence, woven with tales of sacrifice and courage, the name of Trikendrajit Singh of Manipur shines with a resolute brilliance. Known as the “Lion of Manipur,” Trikendrajit Singh’s story is one of extraordinary valour,

uncompromising defiance against colonial authority, and an enduring legacy that continues to inspire generations in Manipur and far beyond.

Trikendrajit Singh was born into the royal family of Manipur, a princely state nestled amidst the lush hills and valleys of India’s Northeast. As the younger brother of Maharaja

Surchandra Singh, Trikendrajit was raised in an environment steeped in tradition, responsibility, and a profound sense of duty towards his people. From a young age, he displayed a keen intellect, remarkable leadership skills, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Manipur, with its strategic location bordering Burma (now Myanmar), had long maintained a unique cultural and political identity, resisting external pressures with resilience. As British colonial ambitions expanded across the Indian subcontinent, Manipur's sovereignty became a target, setting the stage for confrontation.

In the late 19th Century, the British Empire had established its dominance over most of India, but the fiercely independent kingdoms of the Northeast remained outside direct colonial control. Manipur, while maintaining nominal relations with the British, was governed by its own monarch and administrative council. The Manipuri court, with Trikendrajit Singh as one of its key members, was keenly aware of the growing threat posed by imperial designs.

Tensions simmered as the British sought to interfere in Manipur's succession and internal affairs, often under the pretext of maintaining "order" and "good governance." The Manipuri princes, led by Trikendrajit, resisted these encroachments, cherishing their autonomy and the right to self-determination.

The seeds of confrontation were sown with the death of Maharaja Chandrakriti Singh in 1886. A succession dispute erupted, as the British Resident and political agents began to interfere in royal matters, supporting their candidates for the throne. The Manipuri princes, with Trikendrajit as the Senapati (Commander), viewed this as an intolerable breach of their sovereignty.



In 1890, the British backed the deposition of Maharaja Surchandra Singh, replacing him with Kulachandra Singh, Trikendrajit's elder brother. Trikendrajit was appointed as the Senapati, a position that placed him at the forefront of Manipur's military and political affairs. The British, however, continued to pressure the court, demanding greater control and seeking to curb the influence of the Senapati.

The simmering tensions erupted dramatically in March 1891, when British officials, including Chief Commissioner J.W. Quinton, arrived in Imphal to arrest Trikendrajit Singh and assert their authority. The Manipuri people, fiercely loyal to their leaders, rallied in defence of their sovereignty.

A confrontation outside the Kangla Palace escalated, resulting in violence that saw several British officers killed.

The British, stunned and enraged by what they saw as a direct affront to imperial authority, declared war on Manipur. The Anglo-Manipur War had begun, a brief but fiercely contested conflict, that would become a landmark in the annals of India's resistance against colonial rule.

Trikendrajit, as Senapati, led his troops with unmatched courage and strategic acumen. The Manipuri forces, though vastly outnumbered and outgunned, mounted a spirited defence of their homeland. The hills and valleys of Manipur became a battleground where the resolve of a small kingdom faced the might of the British Empire.

Despite their valiant resistance, the Manipuris were eventually overwhelmed by the superior firepower and resources of the British. Imphal fell, and Trikendrajit Singh, along with other leaders, was captured. The British sought to make an example of Manipur's defiance; Trikendrajit and his compatriot Thangal General were put on trial and found guilty of waging war against the Crown.

On August 13, 1891, in full public view on the western ramparts of the Kangla Palace, Trikendrajit Singh and Thangal General were executed by hanging. Even in his final moments, Trikendrajit displayed extraordinary composure and courage, refusing to kneel before colonial

power. His martyrdom sent shockwaves across Manipur and the broader Indian subcontinent, becoming a rallying cry for future generations of freedom fighters.

The sacrifice of Trikendrajit Singh occupies a place of honour in the collective memory of Manipur and India. He is remembered not only as a warrior and a prince, but also as a symbol of resistance against injustice and imperial domination. The Anglo-Manipur War, though a military defeat, was a moral victory that exposed the brutality of colonialism and the indomitable spirit of those who resisted it.

In Manipur, the anniversary of his execution is observed as Patriots' Day, a solemn occasion marked by tributes, processions, and cultural events. The Kangla Fort, where Trikendrajit and his comrades made their last stand, stands as a monument to their valour. Statues and memorials commemorate his sacrifice, inspiring pride and a sense of identity among the people of Manipur.

For many years, the tales of resistance from India's Northeast remained on the periphery of mainstream national narratives. In recent times, however, historians and scholars have sought to give Trikendrajit Singh and the Anglo-Manipur War their rightful place in the story of India's freedom.

Trikendrajit's resistance exemplifies the diversity and depth of India's anti-colonial struggle. He fought not only for the sovereignty of Manipur but for the principle that every community, regardless of size or distance from the heart of the empire, had the right to liberty and self-determination.

The life and sacrifice of Trikendrajit Singh resonate with timeless lessons. His defiance was not just an act of rebellion; it was a principled stand for dignity, honour, and the right to determine one's destiny. The story of the Lion of Manipur reminds us that the quest for freedom is universal, that courage knows no boundaries, and that the legacy of those who dare to resist injustice endures through the ages.

In remembering Trikendrajit Singh, we honour not only a hero of Manipur but a stalwart of India's long and arduous journey to freedom. His name, echoing through the hills of the Northeast, calls us to cherish and protect the hard-won liberty that generations of brave souls fought to achieve.

(Published in the August 2025 edition of PreSense)

Arjun Lal Sethi - Rajasthan

Arjun Lal Sethi, a pivotal yet unsung freedom fighter from Rajasthan, combined political activism and educational reform against the British, enduring imprisonment for India's independence.



India's struggle for independence is marked by the brave efforts of countless individuals who dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom. While many prominent leaders are celebrated nationwide, several regional heroes played crucial roles in igniting grassroots resistance. Among these unsung champions is Arjun Lal Sethi, a freedom fighter from Rajasthan whose relentless pursuit of justice and liberty made him a key figure in the independence movement in western India.

Arjun Lal Sethi was born in 1880 in Jaipur, Rajasthan, into a family deeply rooted in Jainism and social reform. His father, Jawaharlal Sethi, was a respected community leader

who instilled in Arjun Lal a sense of moral responsibility and patriotism from an early age. Sethi excelled academically, mastering Sanskrit, Hindi, English, and Persian, which later helped him communicate effectively with diverse audiences. The cultural and intellectual environment at home nurtured his interest in social justice, philosophy, and spirituality, shaping his worldview and laying the foundation for his future activism.

The turn of the Twentieth Century marked a period of significant political upheaval in India. The oppressive policies of the British Raj, the economic exploitation of Indian resources, and the denial of basic rights to the people fuelled widespread discontent. Arjun Lal Sethi's political awakening was shaped by these circumstances and also by the rising nationalist movements across the country. He was inspired by leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mahatma Gandhi, whose advocacy for Swaraj (self-rule) resonated deeply with his own aspirations for an independent India.

Arjun Lal Sethi emerged as a strong leader in Rajasthan's fight against British rule. His activism was diverse, involving political protest, educational reform, and social upliftment. Sethi was key in organising public meetings, rallies, and protests that energised the people in Jaipur and nearby areas. He gave a voice to the voiceless, urging ordinary citizens to challenge British authority and fight for their rights.

One of his notable contributions was his involvement in the Home Rule Movement, spearheaded by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Sethi established branches of the movement in Rajasthan, mobilising support among students, intellectuals, and common people. His speeches, marked by clarity and conviction, inspired many to join the cause and resist colonial rule.

Recognising the power of education as a tool for social transformation, Arjun Lal Sethi founded the Vardhaman Jain Vidyalyaya in Jaipur in 1918. The institution was not just an academic centre but a hub of nationalist activity. Sethi envisioned the school as a place where students could absorb patriotic values, learn about India's glorious past, and prepare to serve the nation. The curriculum emphasised Indian languages, history, and culture, fostering a sense of pride in one's heritage and a dedication to the freedom struggle.

The British authorities viewed the Vidyalyaya with suspicion, aware of its role in fostering dissent. Sethi faced repeated harassment, surveillance, and restrictions from the colonial administration, but he remained undeterred. His steadfastness inspired both students and teachers, many of whom later became active participants in the independence movement.

Arjun Lal Sethi's activism came at a personal cost. He was arrested multiple times for his anti-British activities, enduring long spells of imprisonment and torture. Despite

the hardships, Sethi refused to compromise his principles. His letters from jail, filled with words of encouragement and hope, motivated his followers to persevere in the face of adversity. Sethi's sacrifices underscored the depth of his commitment to the cause and demonstrated the power of individual resolve in the face of colonial oppression.

Beyond political agitation, Arjun Lal Sethi was a champion of social reform. He campaigned against caste discrimination, untouchability, and social injustice, advocating for the upliftment of marginalised communities. His efforts to promote unity and brotherhood among diverse groups strengthened the fabric of Rajasthan's society and built broad-based support for the freedom movement.

Sethi also contributed to the revival of Jain philosophy and ethics, emphasising the values of non-violence, truth, and compassion. He believed that spiritual awakening was essential for true freedom, and his teachings reflected a harmonious blend of religious and nationalist ideals.

Although Arjun Lal Sethi did not achieve the same level of national prominence as some of his contemporaries, his influence in Rajasthan was significant. The respect he earned among the intelligentsia, students, and the general public ensured that his message continued to resonate long after his death in 1947. Institutions, roads, and public spaces in Rajasthan bear his name, honouring his contributions to the nation's independence.

Sethi's legacy is also evident in the ongoing focus on education and social justice in Rajasthan's public life. His vision for an empowered, enlightened citizenry stays relevant, reminding us of the transformative power of knowledge and activism.

Arjun Lal Sethi exemplifies the courage, commitment, and sacrifice needed to challenge injustice and fight for freedom. His life and work embody the spirit of India's independence movement—a combination of political activism, educational reform, and social change. As we honour the heroes of India's liberation, it is important to remember and celebrate the contributions of regional leaders like Sethi, whose efforts helped shape the country's future as a free and democratic nation.

The story of Arjun Lal Sethi is not just a chapter in Rajasthan's history but an enduring lesson in leadership, resilience, and patriotism. His unwavering resolve in the face of adversity continues to inspire generations, reminding us that the fight for justice and freedom is a collective effort, shaped by the dedication of many individuals across the land.

(Published in the September 2025 edition of PreSense)

Lala Har Dayal - Delhi

Lala Har Dayal was a revolutionary scholar who defied the British, founding the Ghadar Party in the U.S. to mobilize Indians globally for India's freedom.

Lala Har Dayal: The Revolutionary Scholar Who Challenged the British Empire

Lala Har Dayal (1884–1939) stands as one of the most extraordinary figures in India's freedom struggle — a man of great intellect, courage, and idealism who fought British colonial rule not only with weapons but also with words, organisation, and vision. Unlike many revolutionaries who confined their activities within India, Har Dayal became a global figure, spreading the message of independence across continents. His life was a fusion of intellect and action — a philosopher by nature, a scholar by training, and a revolutionary by conviction.

Lala Har Dayal was born on October 14, 1884, in *Delhi*, then part of the Punjab Province of British India. His father, Lala Gauri Dayal, worked as a Reader in a court, and his family belonged to the educated Kayastha community, which valued learning and discipline. From a young age, Har Dayal showed an extraordinary aptitude for studies. He was



deeply influenced by the moral and patriotic ideals of the Arya Samaj movement, founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, which advocated social reform, education, and the revival of Vedic values.

After completing his early education in Delhi, he joined St. Stephen's College, one of the most prestigious institutions in India under British rule. His academic brilliance earned him scholarships and respect among

teachers and peers alike. In 1905, he was awarded a scholarship to study at the University of Oxford, England, where he joined St. John's College. However, the stay in England turned out to be a turning point in his life.

At Oxford, Har Dayal became increasingly disillusioned with the British system of education and governance. He saw firsthand how colonial rule exploited India and denied its people dignity and self-rule. In an extraordinary act of defiance, he resigned his scholarship and abandoned his

plans for a career in the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which was then the highest aspiration for young Indian men.

In his letter of resignation, he wrote words that revealed his growing revolutionary conviction:

“I will not accept the slavery of the British Empire. I will live and die for the freedom of my motherland.”



This act shocked his contemporaries but established him as a man of principle and courage. It also marked the beginning of his lifelong commitment to India's liberation and the awakening of Indian youth.

After leaving Oxford, Har Dayal spent some years in Europe, where he interacted with Indian nationalists,

anarchists, and social reformers. His intellectual curiosity led him to study philosophy, comparative religion, and political theory. He was deeply inspired by thinkers like Mazzini, Marx, and Tolstoy, as well as by the lives of Indian saints and reformers.

In 1907, he moved to Paris, which had become a hub for Indian revolutionaries in exile. There, he came into contact with Madam Bhikaji Cama, Shyamji Krishna Varma, and other members of the India House movement who advocated revolutionary methods to overthrow British rule. Har Dayal's writings and speeches during this period were bold and uncompromising. He argued that British colonialism could never be reformed — it had to be uprooted.

Under pressure from British authorities, Har Dayal moved to Algeria and later to the United States in 1911, where his revolutionary mission took a new and powerful form.

It was in the United States that Lala Har Dayal found the ideal environment to mobilise Indian immigrants in support of the cause of independence. Most of them were poor Punjabi farmers and labourers working in California and Canada, many of whom faced racial discrimination and exploitation. Har Dayal's fiery speeches and passionate writings awakened them to the realisation that their suffering was connected to the slavery of their motherland.

In 1913, with the help of Sohan Singh Bhakna and other leaders, Har Dayal founded the Ghadar Party in San

Francisco. The word *Ghadar* means “revolt” or “rebellion,” symbolising the revolutionary spirit that aimed to shake the foundations of British rule. The Ghadar newspaper, first published on November 1, 1913, became the party’s mouthpiece. Printed in multiple languages — Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English — it was circulated among Indians worldwide, particularly among Indian soldiers serving in the British Army.

The Ghadar Party declared:

“Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our hearts, a war for India’s independence.”

Har Dayal was the brain and heart behind the movement. He inspired the Indian diaspora to take pride in their heritage and to work collectively for national liberation. His revolutionary message resonated strongly among the Indian community in North America, Southeast Asia, and even Africa.

Though a revolutionary, Har Dayal was not a man of violence. His writings show a deep moral and philosophical dimension. He believed that political freedom without personal discipline and education would be meaningless. His book, *“Hints for Self-Culture,”* published later in life, became a manual for self-improvement, intellectual development, and ethical living.

In it, Har Dayal wrote:

“The true patriot is he who first makes himself strong in body, mind, and spirit. Only then can he serve his country effectively.”

He believed that India’s fight for freedom was not merely against foreign rulers but also against ignorance, corruption, and moral decay. His thoughts combined nationalism with universal humanism. He admired Buddhism, respected Western science, and embraced rationalism.

As the Ghadar movement gained momentum, the British Government took notice. In 1914, just before World War I, Har Dayal was arrested by U.S. authorities at the request of the British for his “seditious activities.” However, he managed to escape and fled to Switzerland, and later to Sweden. He continued to write and lecture under assumed names, maintaining correspondence with revolutionaries worldwide.

Eventually, he moved to London, where he lived a quieter life devoted to study and writing. Even though his active revolutionary career had ended, his influence continued to inspire younger nationalists, such as Bhagat Singh, who avidly read his works.

Lala Har Dayal passed away suddenly in Philadelphia, USA, on March 4, 1939, at the age of 54. Some believed his death to be mysterious, though official records list it as

natural. His mortal remains were cremated in the United States, far from his beloved homeland, but his spirit lived on among those who fought for India's freedom.

Today, Lala Har Dayal is remembered not only as a revolutionary but as a visionary intellectual who combined Eastern spirituality with Western rationalism. His call for self-reliance, education, and moral strength remains relevant even in modern India.

Lala Har Dayal's life was a testament to courage, conviction, and uncompromising love for the motherland. He gave up comfort, career, and even personal safety for the cause of Indian independence. Through the Ghadar movement, his writings, and his example, he taught Indians to think freely and act fearlessly.

In the grand tapestry of India's freedom struggle, Lala Har Dayal occupies a unique place — that of a revolutionary scholar whose pen and spirit were mightier than any sword. His words still echo as a timeless reminder that true freedom begins within the mind and heart of every individual.

(Published in the November 2025 edition of PreSense)

Pherozeshah Mehta - Maharashtra

Pherozeshah Mehta, the "Lion of Bombay," pioneered India's independence through constitutional reform, founding the Indian National Congress and revolutionizing civic governance with legal expertise and integrity.

Pherozeshah Mehta was a pioneering Freedom Fighter who shaped India's Early Struggle for Independence. Often called the "Lion of Bombay," he was a leading figure in India's early fight for independence against British colonial rule. His legacy as a leader, reformer, and respected statesman continues to inspire many. Mehta was not only a fierce opponent of British imperialism, but he also helped lay the foundations for democratic governance, modern civic administration, and public participation in India. This article examines his life, ideas, and persistent resistance to British policies, emphasising his significant contributions to India's path toward independence.

Born on August 4, 1845, in Bombay (now Mumbai), Pherozeshah Mehta came from a distinguished Parsi family. His father, Seth Saklatwala Mehta, was a well-known merchant, which afforded young Pherozeshah a comfortable upbringing and access to quality education. Mehta attended Elphinstone College, where he excelled,



particularly in law. His intellectual curiosity and commitment to social justice led him to pursue further studies in England, where he was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1868. This exposure to Western legal and political thought profoundly shaped his worldview and approach to political activism in India.

After returning to India, Mehta quickly established himself as a leading lawyer in Bombay. However, it was his dedication to public service and reform that set him apart. He joined the Bombay Municipal Corporation, where his leadership and commitment to civic improvement earned him the title "Father of Bombay Municipality." Under his guidance, the city saw significant advances in public health, sanitation, and urban infrastructure, setting benchmarks for other Indian cities.

Mehta's entry into politics was driven by his growing disillusionment with British colonial rule. He recognised the exploitative nature of British policies, which prioritised imperial interests over the welfare of Indians. Mehta's opposition to British rule was not merely rhetorical; he advocated constitutional reforms, greater Indian participation in government, and the protection of civil liberties.

He was among the founding members of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885, a platform that would become central to India's freedom movement. Mehta advocated constitutional agitation, peaceful protest, and dialogue with the colonial government. However, he was also known for his uncompromising stance on justice and equality. Through speeches, writings, and public mobilisation, Mehta consistently challenged the British government's arbitrary laws, discriminatory practices, and reluctance to grant Indians political rights.

Pherozech Shah Mehta's leadership at the municipal level set a precedent for Indian self-governance. He advocated for expanding local government powers and democratising civic administration. His efforts led to a more representative and accountable municipal system, thereby empowering citizens and fostering political responsibility.

On the national stage, Mehta played a key role in shaping the INC's early strategies and policies. He was instrumental in drafting petitions, organising meetings, and articulating

Indian leaders' demands to the British authorities. Mehta's legal expertise enabled him to dissect British statutes, expose their flaws, and argue persuasively for reform. His work contributed to the gradual expansion of Indian representation in legislative councils, though he remained critical of reforms that fell short of genuine self-rule.

Mehta's opposition to British rule was particularly evident in his campaigns against unjust laws and taxes. He spoke out against the Vernacular Press Act, which sought to stifle Indian voices, and the Salt Tax, which burdened the poor. Mehta's advocacy spanned education, economic development, and social justice, reflecting his holistic vision for an independent and progressive India.

In the legislative councils, Mehta was a formidable debater. He challenged the colonial government's fiscal policies, criticised its disregard for Indian needs, and defended the rights of marginalised communities. His principled opposition earned him respect even from his adversaries, and his integrity became a benchmark for public service.

Pherozez Shah Mehta's legacy is multifaceted. He helped transform the Bombay Municipal Corporation into a model of urban governance, laying the groundwork for local democracy in India. As a freedom fighter, he empowered Indians to demand their rights, resist colonial exploitation, and envision a future free of foreign domination.

Mehta's approach to opposition—rooted in law, reason, and public engagement—served as a blueprint for subsequent

generations of leaders. His insistence on constitutional methods, though sometimes criticised as overly moderate, ensured that the early freedom movement remained inclusive and focused on long-term change. Mehta also inspired a new generation of activists, including Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who built on his vision and expanded the scope of resistance.

Pherozeshah Mehta is among India's most influential architects of the freedom movement. His opposition to British rule was unwavering, characterised by intellectual rigour, moral courage, and practical reforms. By advocating for constitutional rights, civic improvement, and national unity, Mehta played a key role in preparing India for the eventual victory of independence. His contributions remind us that the fight for freedom is not only fought on the battlefield but also in courts, councils, and city streets—where leaders like Mehta laid the foundation for a just and democratic society. Today, as India continues to evolve, the legacy of Pherozeshah Mehta remains a guiding light for those who seek justice, equality, and progress for all.

(Published in the December 2025 edition of PreSense)

Ropuiliani – Mizoram

Queen Ropuiliani, the first Mizo female ruler, valiantly resisted British colonial expansion in the Lushai Hills, preserving indigenous autonomy through diplomacy and "tlawmngaihna" until her death.



Throughout the annals of India's colonial past, the stories of resistance are often dominated by names from the mainland. However, the remote and forested Lushai Hills—today's Mizoram- witnessed its saga of valour, etched into history by the indomitable Ropuiliani (1828–1895). As the first known Mizo Queen, Ropuiliani's courage and defiance against British rule stand as a testament to the strength and agency of women in the struggle for self-determination. This article delves deep into her life, the context of her reign, and her indelible legacy.

In the early 19th century, the Lushai Hills were inhabited by diverse Mizo tribes, each governed by chieftains or local rulers. Life revolved around jhum cultivation, clan loyalty, and intricate social customs. The British East India Company, having consolidated much of northeastern India,

set its sights on the region, urging expansion for its strategic and economic interests.

Colonial incursions began in earnest following a series of Mizo raids into the British-administered plains of Assam and Bengal. The British responded with punitive expeditions, aiming to curb local resistance and bring the hills under their administration. It was against this turbulent backdrop that Ropuiliani emerged as a leader.

Ropuiliani was born in 1828 into the royal family of the Lushai Hills, a lineage marked by both privilege and responsibility. Details of her early years are veiled in oral tradition, but she is remembered as a woman of intelligence, compassion, and steadfast resolve. Her marriage to a powerful local chief elevated her status, but it was the untimely death of her husband that thrust her into the unaccustomed role of regent and, eventually, the ruler.

At a time when leadership was predominantly a male prerogative, Ropuiliani's rise to power was exceptional. Assuming authority as the guardian of her minor son's chieftainship, she adeptly manoeuvred through court intrigues and external pressures. Her ability to negotiate, inspire loyalty, and command respect cemented her place as the first known Mizo Queen.

The British viewed the Lushai Hills as both a threat and an opportunity. The region's strategic position, coupled with its proximity to Burma and the tea-rich Brahmaputra Valley, made its pacification a colonial imperative. British officials,

unfamiliar with the complex web of local allegiances, often resorted to coercion.

Ropuilianni, however, refused to submit meekly to British overlordship. She saw the encroachment not only as a threat to her own authority but also to the identity and autonomy of her people. By rallying local chiefs and warriors, she orchestrated a campaign of calculated resistance. Her leadership was marked by both diplomacy and defiance—she sent envoys to negotiate but refused to pay excessive tributes or accept the erasure of Mizo customs.

Unlike many rulers who capitulated in the face of overwhelming force, Ropuilianni personified a spirit of “tlawmngaihna”, the Mizo ethic of selfless service and courage. She encouraged her people to unite, fortify their defences, and reject colonial dictates that sought to undermine their way of life.

Ropuilianni’s resistance was not merely military; she wielded the tools of persuasion and diplomacy. She fostered alliances among neighbouring chiefs, creating a formidable network that frustrated British attempts at the divide-and-rule policy. Her court became a rallying point for opposition, a symbol of hope in a time of uncertainty.

Colonial records, though often biased, acknowledge the difficulty posed by Ropuilianni’s opposition. When the British intensified their campaigns in the late 19th century, she stood firm. Skirmishes erupted as local warriors, under her

influence, resisted British patrols and punitive forays into the hills.

Unable to win her submission through negotiation or intimidation, the British eventually resorted to a direct show of force. In a fateful encounter, Ropuiliani was captured by British troops. Even in captivity, she refused to compromise her dignity or betray her people's cause. Her steadfastness earned the grudging admiration of both friends and foes.

On January 3, 1895, Ropuiliani passed away, her death shrouded in the sorrow of a people who had lost their Queen but not her spirit. Though the colonial machinery would eventually subsume the Lushai Hills into the British Empire, Ropuiliani's legacy of resistance endured.

Ropuiliani's story is more than a footnote in the chronicles of resistance; it is a beacon of female leadership and indigenous agency. In an age when women rulers were rare, her assertiveness challenged not only colonial power but also patriarchal norms within Mizo society. She is remembered in folktales and songs, her name invoked as a symbol of courage and integrity.

Today, Ropuiliani occupies a cherished place in the collective memory of the Mizos. Statues, commemorative events, and literary works celebrate her life and sacrifice. Her legacy continues to inspire current movements for justice, equality, and self-determination, highlighting the cost of freedom and the importance of principled resistance.

The saga of Ropuiliani, the first known Mizo Queen, stands as a stirring chapter in the history of India's Northeast. Her defiance against British colonialism illuminated the path for future generations, proving that true leadership transcends gender and circumstance. As the hills she once ruled echo with the songs of her valour, Ropuiliani's story continues to inspire, a lasting tribute to the power of one woman's unwavering resolve in the face of empire.

(Published in the January 2026 edition of PreSense)

Haipou Jadonang - Nagaland

Haipou Jadonang was a visionary Zeliangrong Naga leader who challenged British colonialism through spiritual renewal and the Heraka movement, fighting for political sovereignty and the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage.



Nestled in the verdant hills of the present-day Northeast India lies a tale of resistance, faith, and vision. The story of Haipou Jadonang, a revered leader among the Zeliangrong Nagas, is one of courage and conviction in the face of the oppressive tides of British colonial rule. While many freedom

fighters are celebrated across the Indian subcontinent, Jadonang's legacy is often overlooked, despite his profound impact on the political and spiritual awakening of the Nagas. His struggle was not just a fight for political independence but also a crusade to reclaim the cultural and spiritual heritage of his people.

Haipou Jadonang was born in 1905 in the small hill village of Kambiron, now in the Tamenglong district of Manipur. He belonged to the Zeliangrong community, an amalgamation

of three Naga tribes: Zeme, Liangmei, and Rongmei. Growing up, Jadonang displayed remarkable intelligence, spiritual sensitivity, and a deep connection to his land and people. From a young age, he was drawn to the oral traditions, rituals, and folk songs that formed the tapestry of Naga life.

Jadonang was raised in an environment where colonial influence was rapidly eroding traditional practices. The British, through their policies and Christian missionaries, sought to reshape Naga society, often undermining indigenous faiths and customs. Witnessing these changes, Jadonang felt a calling to defend and revitalise the spiritual life of his community. He began to spend long periods in meditation and prayer, claiming to have visions that guided his path. These spiritual experiences would later become central to both his leadership and the movement he inspired.

The early 20th century was a period of profound transformation for the Nagas. The British Raj, intent on consolidating power over the Northeast, introduced new taxes, land regulations, and administrative structures. Traditional chieftainships were weakened, and local autonomy was undermined. The imposition of forced labour, called 'potang,' and other exploitative practices led to widespread resentment. The Zeliangrong Nagas, fiercely independent and proud of their customs, were particularly affected.

The British administration, unfamiliar with Naga lifeways and often dismissive of their institutions, created a climate of suspicion and unrest. The influx of Christian missionaries further threatened traditional belief systems, as conversions increased and customary laws were replaced by foreign norms.

Against this backdrop, Jadonang emerged as both a spiritual and political leader. With his reputation for healing, prophecy, and wisdom, he attracted a devoted following among the Zeliangrong people. Jadonang's vision went beyond spiritual renewal; he aspired to unite the Nagas and restore their sovereignty. He preached about the imminent end of British rule and the coming of 'Makam Gwangdi'—a promised land of freedom and justice for the Nagas.

His teachings combined traditional Naga beliefs with elements of resistance. He called for the rejection of colonial taxes, the boycott of forced labour, and the restoration of village autonomy. Jadonang drew inspiration from Naga mythology, prophesying that the British would soon be driven out. His followers began to see him as a messianic figure, a deliverer who would lead them to liberation.

Central to Jadonang's campaign was the revival of the Heraka faith, an indigenous religion that emphasized faith in Tingkao Ragwang, the supreme god. The Heraka movement sought to purify Naga practices, eliminating what were seen as superstitious elements while preserving core

rituals and values. Jadonang's religious reforms were both a form of spiritual renewal and a vehicle for political mobilization.

The Heraka movement rapidly gained momentum, with thousands of Zeliangrong Nagas gathering at Jadonang's headquarters in Kambiron. His followers constructed temples, organized mass prayers, and openly denounced colonial authority. The growth of this movement unsettled the British, who saw in it the seeds of a wider anti-colonial uprising.

Alarmed by Jadonang's popularity and the Heraka movement's challenge to their authority, the British authorities began to crack down. They accused Jadonang of inciting rebellion, defying colonial laws, and conspiring against the state. In 1931, Jadonang was arrested on charges of sedition and murder—charges widely believed to have been fabricated.

Despite the lack of concrete evidence, Jadonang was tried by a colonial court and found guilty. On August 29, 1931, he was executed by hanging in Imphal, an event that sent shockwaves throughout the region. His death, however, did not crush the movement he had inspired. Instead, it became a rallying point for Naga resistance.

Haipou Jadonang's martyrdom marked a pivotal moment in the history of the Nagas. His vision of unity, self-respect, and freedom lived in the hearts of his followers. The mantle of leadership soon passed to his disciple, Rani Gaidinliu, a

young woman who would continue the Heraka movement and the struggle for Naga rights.

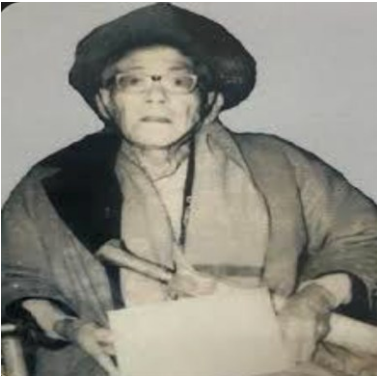
Jadonang's legacy remains profound. He is remembered not just as a freedom fighter, but as a spiritual guide and visionary who challenged the twin oppressions of colonial rule and cultural erasure. His life and message have inspired generations of Nagas to assert their identity and fight for justice. Today, monuments, folk songs, and annual commemorations in Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam keep his memory alive.

To speak of Haipou Jadonang is to invoke the spirit of resistance and renewal that defines the Northeast's struggle against colonialism. Guided by faith and fired by a dream of justice, he united his people and gave them hope in a time of darkness. In the annals of India's freedom movement, Jadonang stands as a beacon—a visionary whose fight for the soul of his land deserves to be remembered and celebrated. As the hills of Nagaland echo his name, the message endures: freedom is both a right and a sacred duty, and the legacy of Haipou Jadonang continues to light the path for generations yet to come.

(Published in the February 2026 edition of PreSense)

Moje Riba - Arunachal Pradesh

Moje Riba, a brave patriot from Arunachal Pradesh, led the Adi community against British rule, famously hoisting the tricolour in 1947 despite facing imprisonment.



India's struggle for independence is replete with stories of valour and sacrifice, but many of its heroes remain unsung outside their native regions. One such freedom fighter is Moje Riba, a relentless patriot from Arunachal Pradesh, whose courage in the face of British colonial rule illuminated the remote North-East with hope and resilience. His efforts, while less well known on the national stage, were instrumental in kindling the spirit of freedom among his people and in integrating the region into the national movement for independence.

Born in 1911 in the Daring village of present-day Arunachal Pradesh, Moje Riba was raised in a time when the region was known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The area was marked by its isolation, distinct tribal cultures, and

a largely self-sufficient agrarian lifestyle. British presence was felt through indirect rule, administrative posts, and attempts to extend their influence over the land and its people. For the indigenous Adi community to which Moje Riba belonged, the encroachments of the colonial authorities were seen as both an affront to their autonomy and a threat to their way of life.

Moje Riba grew up deeply connected to his people's traditions and the lush, rugged landscape of Northeastern India. He imbibed the values of community service, self-reliance, and the fierce defence of his homeland from external domination. These early lessons would become the bedrock of his activism in the years ahead.

The late 1930s and early 1940s were a period of mounting unrest in many parts of India, as the Quit India Movement gained momentum under Mahatma Gandhi's call for nonviolent resistance. News of the growing freedom movement reached the secluded corners of NEFA, inspiring a handful of enlightened individuals, such as Moje Riba. He realised that the struggle for independence was not just a matter for the distant cities but was equally relevant to the hills and valleys of Arunachal Pradesh.

Moje Riba took it upon himself to awaken political consciousness among the Adi people. At a time when communication was severely limited and the risk of arrest was high, he began to gather villagers in secret, sharing the ideals of freedom and self-rule. He encouraged his people

to resist British taxes, boycott foreign goods, and assert their rights as Indians.

The British colonial administration had established outposts and rest houses in select areas of NEFA, maintaining a network of informants and sending punitive expeditions when challenged. Despite these risks, Moje Riba, undaunted, became a leading figure in the local movement against British rule.

His activism reached a climax in 1947, when he hoisted the Indian tricolour flag at Dipa, a village in the present-day Lower Siang district. This act of open defiance was both unprecedented and perilous. The hoisting of the Indian national flag in the region then under direct British control was a bold declaration that the people of Arunachal Pradesh sought to join the rest of India in her march toward independence.

Riba's visible involvement in the freedom movement soon drew the ire of the colonial authorities. He was arrested by the British for his activities and spent several months in jail. During his imprisonment, Moje Riba endured harsh conditions. Yet, his spirit remained unbroken, and his resolve only strengthened. News of his incarceration spread through the villages, further galvanising the local population and drawing more people to the cause.

Even as the British tried to intimidate and suppress the movement, Moje Riba's example acted as a beacon. His courage inspired many in his tribe and neighbouring

communities to resist colonial policies and assert their identity as free Indians.

With India's independence in August 1947, Moje Riba's dreams began to take shape. The withdrawal of British authorities from NEFA brought new challenges: integrating the region into the Indian Union and fostering a sense of national unity among diverse, isolated tribes.

Moje Riba continued to serve his people in the years following independence. He advocated for education, social reforms, and economic development in Arunachal Pradesh. His experience in the freedom movement made him a respected leader, and he encouraged continued engagement with India's new democratic government.

Despite his pivotal role, Moje Riba's contribution remained relatively unacknowledged at the national level for decades. However, within Arunachal Pradesh and among the Adi community, he is revered as a hero who risked everything for the dignity and freedom of his people.

In recent years, efforts have been made to bring attention to his story. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh honoured him posthumously with tributes and public commemorations. Educational institutions and public forums increasingly teach his legacy, ensuring that his story inspires new generations.

The story of Moje Riba is woven into the broader tapestry of India's fight for independence, highlighting that the

struggle was not confined to the well-known centres of resistance but flourished even in the remotest corners. Through his courage, vision, and quiet determination, Moje Riba demonstrated that the spirit of freedom transcends geography, language, and culture.

His life is a testament to the power of individual will and the enduring hope that even the smallest, most isolated voices can echo across the mountains and valleys of history. As India continues to celebrate its unity in diversity, remembering heroes like Moje Riba ensures that the silent flames of resistance are never forgotten, lighting the path for all who cherish liberty and justice.

(Published in the March 2026 edition of PreSense)

Tileswari Baruah - Assam

Tileswari Baruah, a teenage girl from Assam's Darrang district, was martyred in December 1942 while defiantly hoisting India's national flag against British colonial police.



In the tapestry of India's long and arduous struggle for independence, the stories of countless unsung heroes are woven each thread representing sacrifice, resilience, and an unwavering yearning for liberty. Among these remarkable individuals stands Tileswari Baruah, a courageous freedom fighter from Assam whose valour and dedication played a significant role in

the fight against British colonial rule. Though her name may not find frequent mention in the mainstream chronicles, her actions and legacy are etched in the spirit of resistance that swept through Assam and the rest of India.

Tileswari Baruah was born in the early 20th century in Rangagarah, a small village in the undivided district of Darrang, Assam. She belonged to a humble family whose values revolved around hard work, integrity, and a profound love for the motherland. Growing up in colonial India, Tileswari witnessed firsthand the injustices and hardships imposed by the British Raj. The oppressive policies of the colonial regime, the exploitation of local resources, and the curtailment of civil liberties were stark realities that shaped her consciousness from a young age.

Education was a privilege, especially for girls in rural Assam during that era. However, Tileswari's family encouraged her to learn and stay informed. She imbibed the stories of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, drawing inspiration from their sacrifices and philosophies. The growing wave of the Indian freedom movement, with its call for non-violent resistance and mass mobilisation, resonated deeply with her.

The 1940s marked a period of intense political upheaval across India, as the Quit India Movement swept through towns and villages, igniting a collective spirit of dissent. Assam was no exception. The British, wary of the growing unrest, responded with repressive measures, arrests, violence, and widespread intimidation. Yet, these actions only strengthened the resolve of the people.

Tileswari Baruah became actively involved in the freedom struggle during this critical phase. She joined local groups

mobilising for the Quit India Movement and became the face of resistance in her region. Her commitment was not confined to rhetoric; she was a woman of action, organising protests, motivating women and youth, and acting as a bridge between the movement's leaders and the grassroots.

Tileswari's most defining moment came during the historic protest at Barangabari in December 1942. The Quit India Movement had reached its crescendo, and the people of Assam, emboldened by calls for "Do or Die," rose in unison against British rule. The British administration, alarmed by the swelling tide of protests, targeted villages suspected of sheltering freedom fighters and supporters.

Barangabari, a quiet village in Darrang, became a site of fervent resistance. When British police attempted to seize the national flag, an act meant to crush the morale of the protestors, Tileswari Baruah emerged as a symbol of defiance. Barely a teenager at the time, she led the villagers in hoisting the tricolour flag in the face of armed colonial police. Undeterred by threats and violence, she stood tall, her voice ringing with the demand for freedom.

The British police, seeking to quell the uprising, opened fire on the protestors. Tileswari Baruah was struck down by bullets, sacrificing her life for the cause of independence. Her martyrdom electrified the movement in Assam; her courage inspired men, women, and children alike to continue the fight with renewed determination.

Tileswari Baruah's sacrifice became a rallying point in Assam's freedom struggle. Although her young life was cut short, her story reverberated across the region, galvanising others to join the movement. She was immortalised in folk songs, poems, and local lore, her name whispered with reverence in the corridors of Assam's villages and towns.

Despite her profound contribution, Tileswari's story remains largely absent from national histories. Yet, in Assam, her legacy endures. Every year, on the anniversary of her martyrdom, local communities organise commemorations and flag-raising ceremonies in her honour. Educational institutions and organisations strive to keep her memory alive, ensuring that new generations learn of her valour and ideals.

Tileswari Baruah was not an isolated figure; rather, she represented the indomitable spirit of Assamese women who participated in the freedom struggle. Women from diverse backgrounds broke social constraints and risked their lives, whether by leading processions, sheltering activists, or confronting British authorities head-on. The narrative of Tileswari is woven into a larger tapestry of female resistance, which deserves greater recognition in the annals of Indian history.

Tileswari's actions underscored the critical role of women and youth in movements for social justice. She proved that courage knows no age or gender, and that the quest for freedom is a collective endeavour.

Tileswari Baruah's life and sacrifice stand as a testament to the undying spirit of India's freedom struggle. She was a beacon of hope and defiance—an ordinary village girl who became an extraordinary symbol of resistance. Her story reminds us that the fight for justice and dignity is not the preserve of a few but the birthright and responsibility of every individual.

Today, as we celebrate India's independence, it is imperative to remember and honour the sacrifices of heroes like Tileswari Baruah. Let her legacy inspire us to uphold the values of liberty, equality, and courage in the face of adversity. The Tricolour Flag she defended with her life continues to flutter in free India's skies as a living tribute to her and countless others who dared to dream of freedom.

(Published in the April 2026 edition of PreSense)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale - Maharashtra

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a visionary moderate leader who laid the intellectual foundation of India's freedom struggle through constitutional reforms, education, economic critique, and mentoring Mahatma Gandhi.



India's freedom struggle was shaped not only by revolutionaries and mass movements but also by visionary leaders who laid the intellectual and moral foundations for the nation's awakening. Among these towering personalities, Gopal

Krishna Gokhale holds a place of great honour. Known for his wisdom, patriotism, moderation, and deep commitment to public service, Gokhale was among the earliest national leaders to dedicate his life to India's political and social emancipation. His struggles, sacrifices, and ideals inspired future generations of freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi.

Born on 9 May 1866 in Ratnagiri district of present-day Maharashtra, Gopal Krishna Gokhale came from a humble background. Despite financial hardships, he excelled academically and developed a strong interest in public affairs. Education became the cornerstone of his life, and he firmly believed that national progress could be achieved only through enlightenment and social reform. At a young age, he joined the Deccan Education Society and later became a professor at Fergusson College in Pune. His devotion to education reflected his belief that an informed society was essential to freedom.

Gokhale entered public life at a time when India was firmly under British control. The Indian people faced poverty, heavy taxation, discrimination, and denial of political rights. Amid fear and submission, Gokhale emerged as a courageous voice demanding constitutional reforms and greater Indian participation in governance.

He became a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress and was part of the moderate school of political thought. Unlike the extremists who favoured aggressive agitation, Gokhale believed in constitutional methods, dialogue, persuasion, and gradual reform. However, moderation should never be mistaken for weakness. He fearlessly criticised unjust British policies and tirelessly advocated for Indians' rights.

One of Gokhale's major struggles was his relentless fight against oppressive taxation and economic exploitation by

the British government. He exposed how British policies drained India's wealth and impoverished millions. Through speeches, legislative debates, and public campaigns, he demanded a reduction in land revenue, expansion of education, and improvement in public welfare. He also strongly argued for Indian representation in government services and legislative councils.

As a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, Gokhale earned immense respect for his eloquence, scholarship, and balanced arguments. His speeches reflected deep knowledge, patriotism, and compassion for the suffering masses. Though working within British-established institutions, he used every available platform to voice India's aspirations. His dedication to public causes often brought him into conflict with colonial authorities, yet he remained steadfast in his convictions.

Gokhale also recognised that political freedom alone would not uplift India unless accompanied by social reform. He worked to spread education, especially among the poor and marginalised sections of society. He opposed caste discrimination and believed that national unity was essential to India's progress. His vision extended beyond politics to the moral and intellectual development of society.

In 1905, Gokhale founded the Servants of India Society to train selfless workers committed to national service. Members of the Society devoted themselves to education, social reform, rural uplift, and public welfare. Gokhale

wanted young Indians to embrace service, sacrifice, honesty, and patriotism. The Society became an important institution in shaping socially conscious citizens.

One of the greatest tributes to Gokhale's influence came from Mahatma Gandhi, who regarded him as his political guru. When Gandhi returned from South Africa, Gokhale helped him understand India's conditions and advised him to travel across the country before entering politics. Gandhi admired Gokhale's simplicity, integrity, moderation, and spirit of service. Many of the ethical principles later associated with Gandhi were deeply shaped by Gokhale's teachings.

Despite his immense contributions, Gokhale's life was marked by struggles and personal sacrifices. He worked tirelessly despite severe stress and declining health. The burden of public responsibilities, constant travel, and political pressures took a toll on his health. Yet he never abandoned his mission to serve the nation. His dedication remained unwavering until his final days.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale passed away on 19 February 1915 at the relatively young age of forty-eight. Though his life was short, his impact on India's freedom movement was profound and enduring. He belonged to the generation of pioneers who laid the intellectual groundwork for India's eventual independence.

Gokhale's legacy lies not merely in political achievements but in the values he upheld — moderation, integrity, service,

education, tolerance, and constitutionalism. He showed that patriotism could be expressed through wisdom, discipline, and constructive reform. Amid political uncertainty, he served as a guiding star for future generations.

Today, as India continues its journey as a democracy, Gopal Krishna Gokhale's life remains deeply relevant. His emphasis on ethical leadership, public service, and social responsibility offers valuable lessons for modern society. He taught that true nationalism must be rooted in compassion, inclusiveness, and a commitment to the welfare of all citizens.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was not merely an early freedom fighter; he was a visionary nation-builder whose ideals illuminated the path for India's struggle for independence. His sacrifices and principles continue to inspire generations, reminding us that enduring change is achieved not only through protest but also through wisdom, character, and selfless service to the nation.

(Published in the May 2026 edition of PreSense)

Lala Lajpat Rai - Punjab

Lala Lajpat Rai, the "Lion of Punjab," was a fearless freedom fighter, educator, and "Lal-Bal-Pal" member who sacrificed his life resisting British rule.

Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the most prominent leaders of India's freedom struggle against British rule. Revered as the



“Lion of Punjab,” he dedicated his life to the service of the nation and inspired millions of Indians to fight for independence. His courage, patriotism, and unwavering commitment to freedom made him one of the greatest freedom fighters in Indian history. Along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, he formed the

famous trio known as “Lal-Bal-Pal,” which played a significant role in awakening national consciousness among Indians.

Lala Lajpat Rai was born on January 28, 1865, in Dhudike village in present-day Punjab. His father, Munshi Radha

Krishan Azad, was a teacher and scholar, while his mother, Gulab Devi, was a deeply religious woman. From an early age, Lajpat Rai displayed exceptional intelligence and a strong sense of justice. He completed his education in Lahore and later studied law. Although he became a successful lawyer, his true passion lay in serving society and working for the nation's welfare.

Lajpat Rai was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Arya Samaj, a reform movement founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The Arya Samaj emphasised social reform, education, and the revival of Indian cultural values. Inspired by these ideals, Lajpat Rai became actively involved in social work and educational initiatives. He believed that education was essential for national progress and helped establish several educational institutions, including the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges.

As British rule in India became increasingly oppressive, Lajpat Rai emerged as a strong critic of colonial policies. He joined the Indian National Congress and worked tirelessly to mobilise people against British exploitation. Unlike some leaders who preferred gradual reforms, he advocated a more assertive approach to achieving self-rule. He encouraged Indians to develop self-confidence, promote indigenous industries, and reduce dependence on British goods.

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 by the British Government sparked widespread protests across India. Lala Lajpat Rai played a leading role in the Swadeshi Movement, which urged Indians to boycott British products and support local industries. He travelled extensively, delivering powerful speeches that inspired people to participate in the freedom struggle. His passionate advocacy for national pride and self-reliance earned him immense popularity.

The British authorities viewed Lajpat Rai as a threat because of his growing influence. In 1907, he was arrested and deported to Mandalay in Burma (now Myanmar) without trial. Although he was later released due to public pressure, the incident further enhanced his reputation as a fearless nationalist leader. He continued his political activities with even greater determination after his return.

During World War I, Lajpat Rai travelled to the United States, where he sought international support for India's independence. He wrote extensively about British rule and its impact on India. His books, including *Young India*, *England's Debt to India*, and *Unhappy India*, exposed the injustices of colonial rule and highlighted India's aspirations for freedom. Through his writings and lectures, he helped create global awareness about India's struggle for independence.

After returning to India, Lajpat Rai became actively involved in the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Although he respected Gandhi's

leadership, he maintained his independent views on several political issues. He believed that the fight for freedom required both mass participation and strong political action. Throughout his career, he remained committed to the goal of India's complete independence.

One of the most significant events in Lala Lajpat Rai's life occurred in 1928. The British government appointed the Simon Commission to discuss constitutional reforms in India. However, the Commission contained no Indian members, which angered people across the country. Indians regarded it as an insult to their aspirations and demanded that it be boycotted.

When the Simon Commission arrived in Lahore on October 30, 1928, Lajpat Rai led a massive peaceful protest against it. Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets carrying black flags and shouting slogans such as "Simon Go Back." The protest was non-violent, but the police responded with brutal force. Under the orders of British police officer James A. Scott, the protesters were subjected to a severe lathi charge.

Despite his age, Lajpat Rai stood firmly at the forefront of the demonstration. He was struck repeatedly by police batons and suffered serious injuries. Refusing to be intimidated, he declared, "Every blow aimed at me is a nail in the coffin of British imperialism." These words became a powerful symbol of resistance and determination.

Although he initially survived the assault, his injuries proved fatal. On November 17, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai passed away. His death shocked and enraged the nation. Indians regarded him as a martyr who had sacrificed his life for the cause of freedom. His death also inspired a new generation of revolutionaries, including Bhagat Singh, who sought to avenge the attack on their beloved leader.

Lala Lajpat Rai's contributions extended beyond politics. He was a social reformer, educator, writer, and institution builder. He founded the Servants of the People Society in 1921 to promote social service and national development. The organisation continues its work even today, reflecting its enduring legacy. He also championed causes such as women's education, social equality, and economic self-reliance.

The legacy of Lala Lajpat Rai remains deeply embedded in India's national memory. He demonstrated extraordinary courage in confronting colonial oppression and inspired countless Indians to join the freedom movement. His commitment to education, social reform, and national unity contributed significantly to India's awakening as a modern nation.

In conclusion, Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the greatest heroes of India's struggle for independence. His life exemplified patriotism, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to the nation. Through his leadership, writings, and fearless resistance to British rule, he helped shape the

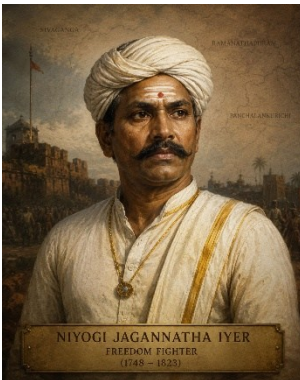
course of Indian history. Even today, he is remembered with admiration and respect as the Lion of Punjab, whose sacrifice strengthened the fight for freedom and brought India closer to independence.

(Published in the June 2026 edition of PreSense)

Jagannatha Iyer – Tamil Nadu

Jagannatha Iyer, an unsung early revolutionary from Tamil Nadu, organized armed resistance and supply networks against the British. He survived a brutal one thousand lashes before being exiled to Penang.

"The story of India's freedom struggle is incomplete unless we remember the countless unsung heroes who sacrificed everything for the nation's liberty. Jagannatha Iyer stands among those forgotten patriots whose courage deserves lasting recognition."



The history of India's freedom movement is often narrated through the lives of celebrated national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bhagat Singh. Yet long before the emergence of an organised national movement, numerous local heroes across the country courageously resisted foreign domination. Tamil Nadu occupies a distinguished place in this early resistance, producing many fearless patriots who challenged the expanding authority of the British East India

Company. Among these early revolutionaries was Jagannatha Iyer, also known as Niyogi Jagannatha Iyer, whose extraordinary courage and sacrifice deserve a prominent place in India's history.

Although historical records about Jagannatha Iyer are limited, available accounts indicate that he hailed from the Niyogi community and was associated with Rajasingamangalam in the present-day Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. He is believed to have lived during the closing years of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century—a period marked by widespread resistance to British expansion in South India. This was an era when the British East India Company sought to consolidate its political and military control over the region, often disregarding the rights and sovereignty of local rulers and communities.

The Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga regions became strongholds of resistance against colonial rule. Patriotic leaders such as the Marudu Brothers, Maveerar Mayilappan, Muthu Karuppa Thevar, and supporters of Muthuramalinga Sethupathi mobilised the people to defend their homeland. Jagannatha Iyer joined this patriotic movement with determination and conviction. Unlike later leaders who relied on constitutional methods, public meetings and political campaigns, he belonged to a generation that believed armed resistance was the only effective response to colonial oppression.

Jagannatha Iyer actively participated in organising resistance against the East India Company. Historical accounts associate him with the struggles in Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, and Panchalankurichi, where local chieftains and freedom fighters united to defend their territories. His role extended beyond the battlefield. He reportedly helped coordinate the movement of men, medicines and essential supplies to the resistance forces, demonstrating that successful struggles require not only brave soldiers but also capable organisers and committed supporters. One account records that carts loaded with medicines and provisions, accompanied by thousands of fighters, were dispatched to Panchalankurichi in support of the anti-British campaign. Such cooperation illustrates the remarkable unity displayed by the people of Tamil Nadu in opposing foreign rule.

Jagannatha Iyer's patriotism was matched by his personal courage. He is said to have taken part in direct attacks on Company forces and to have refused to surrender despite relentless British military operations. When several centres of resistance eventually fell, he was captured along with many of his fellow patriots. During interrogation, British officials reportedly accused him of attempting to kill one of their officers. Even under such grave circumstances, Jagannatha Iyer remained steadfast and unrepentant. His fearless conduct reflected the spirit of countless freedom fighters who preferred suffering and death to submission before an unjust foreign power.

The punishment imposed on him was exceptionally harsh. Contemporary accounts describe Jagannatha Iyer enduring one thousand lashes, an unimaginably cruel form of corporal punishment inflicted by the colonial authorities. While several of his companions reportedly succumbed to similar torture, Jagannatha Iyer survived this brutal ordeal, demonstrating extraordinary physical endurance and mental strength. His survival itself became a symbol of indomitable courage and unwavering commitment to the cause of freedom.

After this punishment, Jagannatha Iyer was deported by ship to Penang, where political prisoners and rebels from across India were exiled and compelled to perform hard labour. Exile was intended not merely as punishment but as a means of permanently removing influential patriots from their homeland and discouraging future resistance. Life in exile was marked by physical hardship, emotional suffering and complete separation from family and community. Although the precise details of Jagannatha Iyer's final years remain uncertain, he is believed to have endured immense suffering in distant lands, far removed from the soil for which he had sacrificed everything.

The incomplete historical record surrounding Jagannatha Iyer reflects a broader reality of India's freedom struggle. Many early revolutionaries were ordinary men and women whose sacrifices were never systematically documented. Colonial records often portrayed them merely as rebels or

insurgents, while later historical narratives understandably focused on nationally prominent leaders. As a result, countless regional heroes faded from public memory despite their invaluable contributions. Remembering Jagannatha Iyer therefore honours not only one individual but also acknowledges the many forgotten patriots who laid the foundations for India's eventual independence.

Jagannatha Iyer's life also reminds us that the Indian freedom movement was not a single event but a long, continuous struggle encompassing diverse forms of resistance. Decades before the Indian National Congress launched nationwide campaigns, courageous individuals in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere had already begun challenging foreign domination. Their sacrifices inspired subsequent generations and showed that the desire for freedom was deeply rooted among the people of India.

His story offers enduring lessons for modern India. It teaches us the importance of courage in defending justice, unity in adversity, and unwavering commitment to principles even in the face of overwhelming odds. It also reminds us that true patriotism is measured not by words but by selfless service and sacrifice for the greater good. Jagannatha Iyer neither sought fame nor expected recognition; his actions were guided solely by love for his motherland.

Today, as India continues to celebrate the achievements of its freedom fighters, it is equally important to bring the lives of lesser-known heroes into the national consciousness.

Schools, colleges, researchers and historians should make greater efforts to document and disseminate their stories. Memorials, publications and educational programmes dedicated to these forgotten patriots would enrich our understanding of the freedom movement and inspire future generations.

In conclusion, Jagannatha Iyer stands as a shining example of Tamil Nadu's rich tradition of courage and resistance. Though history has not accorded him the prominence he deserves, his life embodies the highest ideals of patriotism, sacrifice and unwavering devotion to the cause of freedom. By remembering and honouring heroes like Jagannatha Iyer, we pay tribute not only to one remarkable individual but also to the countless unnamed men and women whose sacrifices ultimately paved the way for India's independence. Their legacy remains a priceless inheritance, reminding every Indian that freedom was won through extraordinary courage, immeasurable suffering and an unshakable belief in the nation's destiny.

(Published in the July 2026 edition of PreSense)

Veer Surendra Sai – Odisha

Veer Surendra Sai, a Chauhan dynasty royal from Odisha, waged a prolonged guerrilla resistance against the British for four decades. Despite enduring nearly 37 years of imprisonment, his spirit remained unbroken.

The struggle for India's independence did not begin with the Indian National Congress or the movements led by Mahatma Gandhi. Decades earlier, brave men and women from different parts of India had risen against British domination. One such extraordinary patriot was Veer Surendra Sai, the legendary freedom fighter of Odisha, whose life symbolised courage, sacrifice, perseverance and unwavering commitment to justice. Though his name is not as widely known as many national leaders', his contribution to India's freedom struggle remains one of the most inspiring chapters in the nation's history.



Veer Surendra Sai was born on 23 January 1809 in the village of Khinda near Sambalpur in present-day Odisha. He belonged to the royal Chauhan dynasty that had ruled

Sambalpur for centuries. From an early age, Surendra Sai displayed exceptional courage, leadership and concern for his people. He received training in horse riding, swordsmanship and military tactics, preparing him for the responsibilities of leadership.

His claim to the throne of Sambalpur became the central issue that brought him into conflict with the British East India Company. Ignoring the traditional succession rights of the Chauhan family, the British interfered in the administration of Sambalpur and installed rulers favourable to their interests. This injustice sowed the seeds of a prolonged resistance movement.

Surendra Sai refused to accept British interference in the internal affairs of Sambalpur. He strongly believed that the people of Odisha had the right to choose their own ruler without foreign intervention.

When the British rejected his legitimate claim to the throne, he organised resistance against their authority. He was joined by local zamindars, tribal communities, peasants and loyal supporters who viewed British rule as oppressive and unjust.

The forests, hills and rugged terrain of western Odisha became the base from which Surendra Sai launched his campaign against the British.

Recognising his growing influence, the British arrested Surendra Sai in **1840** and sentenced him to life

imprisonment. He was lodged in the Hazaribagh Jail in present-day Jharkhand. For nearly seventeen years, he remained behind bars. Most leaders would have accepted defeat after such prolonged imprisonment. Surendra Sai, however, remained mentally strong and continued to dream of liberating his homeland.

The outbreak of the First War of Indian Independence in 1857 dramatically changed the course of his life. As rebellion spread across northern and central India, revolutionaries released Surendra Sai from Hazaribagh Jail, believing that his leadership was essential for organising resistance in Odisha. Returning to Sambalpur, he was welcomed by the people as their natural leader. Within a short period, he reorganised the resistance movement and united several tribal communities, local chiefs and peasants against the British administration.

Veer Surendra Sai became renowned for his mastery of guerrilla warfare. Instead of engaging the British in conventional battles, he adopted highly effective hit-and-run tactics. His forces attacked British military convoys, disrupted communication lines, destroyed supply routes, captured arms and ammunition, and disappeared into dense forests before the British could retaliate. The forests of the Barapahad region became almost impregnable to British forces. His intimate knowledge of the terrain enabled him to evade capture repeatedly despite extensive military operations launched against him.

One of Surendra Sai's greatest strengths was the unwavering support he enjoyed among the people. The tribal communities, particularly the Gonds, Binjhals and other forest-dwelling groups, considered him their protector. Villagers supplied food, shelter and intelligence. Women played an important role by secretly carrying messages and helping freedom fighters evade British surveillance. The movement thus became a genuine people's struggle rather than merely a dynastic conflict.

For nearly four decades, Surendra Sai remained one of the most formidable opponents of British rule in eastern India. British officers repeatedly admitted that he possessed extraordinary leadership qualities. Numerous military expeditions failed to suppress his movement. Unable to defeat him militarily, the British increasingly relied on spies, informers and deception. Ultimately, they succeeded in capturing him through treachery rather than open battle.

In 1864, after prolonged negotiations and assurances, Surendra Sai was arrested once again. He was imprisoned in the Asirgarh Fort in present-day Madhya Pradesh. Unlike his earlier imprisonment, this confinement was extremely harsh. He was kept away from his homeland, his family and his loyal followers. Despite severe hardships, he never surrendered his ideals nor sought favour from the colonial government.

After spending nearly twenty years in captivity following his final arrest, Veer Surendra Sai passed away in Asirgarh

Fort on 28 February 1884. He died far away from the people for whom he had sacrificed his entire life. Although the British imprisoned his body, they could never imprison his spirit. His unwavering commitment to freedom continues to inspire generations of Indians.

Today, Veer Surendra Sai is remembered as one of Odisha's greatest sons. Several institutions have been named in his honour, including Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) at Burla. Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla. Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda. Statues and memorials across Odisha pay tribute to his remarkable contribution.

Veer Surendra Sai's life offers valuable lessons for every Indian. He demonstrated that: Freedom is worth every sacrifice, Leadership demands courage and integrity. Unity among people is the strongest weapon against oppression. Love for one's motherland transcends personal ambition. Persistence can overcome even the most powerful adversaries. Despite repeated imprisonment, betrayal and suffering, he never abandoned the cause of freedom. Although Odisha reveres him as a national hero, Surendra Sai deserves much wider recognition throughout India.

His struggle began decades before the organised national movement and persisted for nearly forty years. Few freedom fighters endured such prolonged hardship while maintaining unwavering resistance to British rule.

His contribution deserves greater prominence in school textbooks, university curricula and public discourse. Remembering heroes like Veer Surendra Sai enriches our understanding of India's freedom struggle by highlighting the sacrifices made in every region of the country.

Veer Surendra Sai was not merely a claimant to a princely throne; he was a fearless patriot who devoted his life to defending the freedom and dignity of his people. His courage in confronting one of the world's most powerful colonial empires, his mastery of guerrilla warfare, his ability to inspire ordinary villagers and tribal communities, and his willingness to endure decades of imprisonment make him one of India's greatest freedom fighters.

His life reminds us that India's independence was not won overnight nor by a handful of famous leaders alone. It was the result of the sacrifices of innumerable heroes like Veer Surendra Sai, who fought tirelessly for justice and liberty.

As we honour the builders of modern India, let us also remember this indomitable son of Odisha whose courage continues to inspire the nation. His legacy stands as a timeless reminder that true patriotism is measured not by power or position, but by one's willingness to sacrifice everything for the freedom and welfare of the motherland.

(Published in the August 2026 edition of PreSense)

V. O. Chidambaram Pillai – Tamil Nadu

V. O. Chidambaram Pillai ("Kappalottiya Tamizhan") challenged British economic dominance by founding the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company and leading labor rights movements, enduring harsh imprisonment and severe personal sacrifices for Indian independence.

The history of India's freedom struggle is not merely the story of political protests and prison terms. It is also a story of economic resistance, courage, entrepreneurship, and the determination to prove that Indians could challenge the institutions of colonial power. Few freedom fighters embodied this spirit like V.

O. Chidambaram Pillai (V.O.C.), popularly remembered as "Kappalottiya Tamizhan" — the Tamil Helmsman.

Born on 5 September 1872 at Ottapidaram in the present-day Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai became a lawyer, nationalist, entrepreneur, labour leader and political activist. The Government of India's



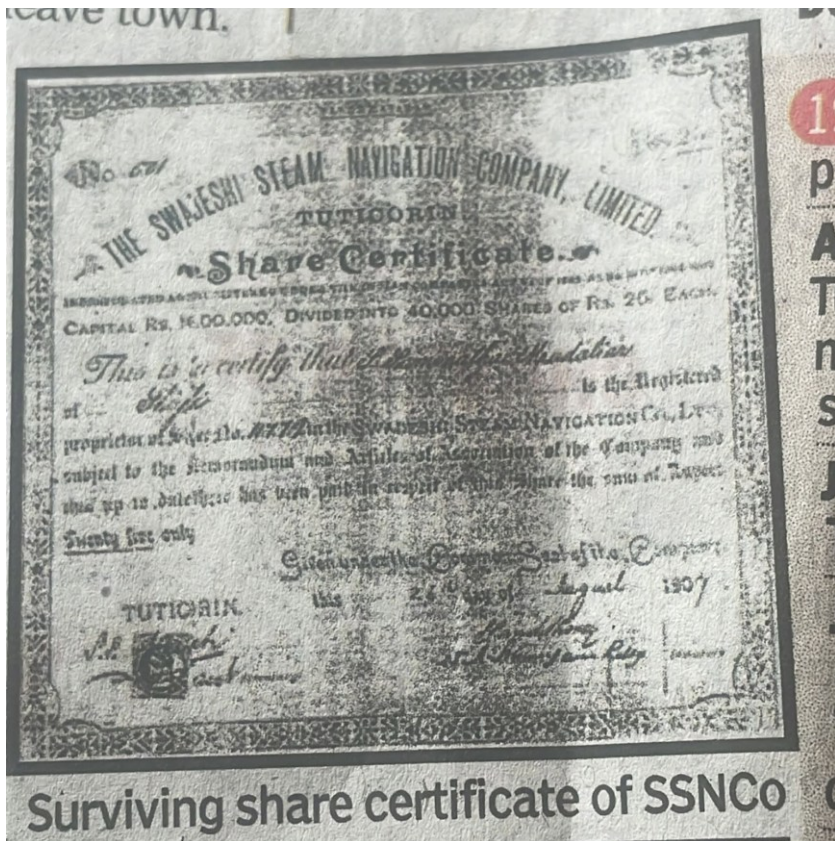
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative recognises him as one of the personalities associated with India's freedom struggle. V.O.C. was born to Olaganathan Pillai and Paramayee Ammal. He studied law and built a successful legal practice. His legal practice gave him an understanding of colonial administration and the unequal economic and political structures under British rule.

The political atmosphere in India changed significantly after the Partition of Bengal in 1905. The Swadeshi movement encouraged Indians to boycott foreign goods and develop indigenous industries. V.O.C. was deeply influenced by this nationalist awakening and came into contact with prominent leaders and intellectuals. His association with fellow nationalists, including Subramania Bharati and Subramania Siva, strengthened his commitment to the freedom movement. For V.O.C., however, patriotism could not remain merely a political slogan. He believed that political freedom required economic independence.

The most notable achievement of V.O.C.'s career was founding the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in 1906. At the time, the British India Steam Navigation Company dominated shipping between Tuticorin and Colombo, and British commercial interests controlled a major share of maritime trade in southern India. V.O.C. decided to challenge this monopoly.

His idea was bold: to establish an Indian-owned shipping company to operate steamships on the same route. He

mobilised Indian traders and patriotic citizens to raise capital and formed the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company. IIT Madras describes the venture as a direct challenge to British maritime dominance and notes that V.O.C. had to contend not only with a powerful British commercial competitor but also with the support colonial authorities gave that competitor.



Surviving share certificate of SSNCo

The company began operating ships between Tuticorin and Colombo, demonstrating that Indians could enter an industry dominated by British companies. This was more than a business venture. It was an act of economic nationalism. V.O.C. was effectively telling the British: India could produce, trade, organise capital, and operate its own enterprises. The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company therefore became a powerful symbol of resistance.

The success of the Swadeshi company threatened established British commercial interests, intensifying competition. The British India Steam Navigation Company reduced fares and adopted other measures to make it difficult for the Indian company to survive. But V.O.C. refused to retreat. His campaign also urged people to boycott British commercial interests. The confrontation between the two companies thus became part of the wider Swadeshi struggle. V.O.C.'s nationalism extended beyond commerce. He became increasingly involved in the workers' cause.

In 1908, V.O.C. supported the workers of the Coral Mills in Tuticorin, who were protesting against low wages and harsh working conditions. He addressed workers and helped organise their struggle. The workers demanded improvements, including better wages, reduced working hours and weekly holidays. The strike lasted several days and ultimately secured important concessions from management. (Wikipedia) This episode is significant

[illegible]

He understood that the freedom movement had to involve not only educated elites but also workers, traders and ordinary citizens. His activities earned him enormous popularity in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli.

V.O.C. was part of a powerful nationalist circle in Tamil Nadu, which included Subramania Bharati and Subramania Siva. Bharati used poetry and journalism to awaken national consciousness. Siva was an energetic speaker who travelled widely, addressing audiences on the issue of independence. V.O.C. contributed through organisation, political leadership, economic initiatives and mobilisation of

workers. Together, these personalities helped transform southern Tamil Nadu into a major centre of nationalist activity. Their activities drew the attention of the British authorities.

In March 1908, V.O.C. and Subramania Siva were arrested as the authorities grew increasingly concerned about their nationalist activities. The arrests triggered widespread protests in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli. Shops and educational institutions closed, and public demonstrations were held. The unrest became a significant episode of the Swadeshi movement in the Madras Presidency (Wikipedia). The colonial government treated V.O.C. as a serious political threat. He was prosecuted for sedition and other charges and initially sentenced to two life terms. On appeal, the sentence was substantially reduced, but he still endured years of harsh imprisonment.

The imprisonment of V.O.C. became one of the most painful chapters of his life. He was subjected to extremely harsh prison conditions and forced labour. Accounts of his imprisonment describe him being compelled to work at an oil press, traditionally operated by animals. This cruel treatment contributed to his later popular title, “Chekkilutta Chemmal”, meaning the distinguished man who was made to work the oil press. The physical hardship did not extinguish his spirit. Instead, his suffering became a symbol of the sacrifices made by freedom fighters. He was

eventually released from prison in December 1912, after years of colonial punishment.

Freedom from prison did not mean a return to his former life. His legal career had been severely affected, his business had collapsed, and years of imprisonment had damaged his health and finances. The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company could not withstand the sustained pressure from its British competitor and the consequences of V.O.C.'s imprisonment. Yet he continued to write, think, and participate in public life.

V.O.C. was also a writer and scholar. His intellectual interests extended beyond politics. He translated works into Tamil and wrote on ethical and philosophical subjects. His writings reveal that he regarded personal discipline, education, morality and social responsibility as essential to national regeneration. For example, his translation *Valimaikku Markkam* was based on James Allen's *From Poverty to Power*.

The importance of V.O.C.'s contribution lies in his understanding of the economic dimension of freedom. For him, Swadeshi did not merely mean buying Indian goods. It meant building Indian enterprises; developing indigenous capital; encouraging entrepreneurship; creating employment; challenging foreign economic monopolies; improving the conditions of workers; and developing self-confidence among Indians. In this regard, V.O.C.'s vision was remarkably comprehensive. His shipping company

was therefore not simply a commercial enterprise. It was a political statement expressed through business.

V.O.C. never enjoyed the personal wealth that his professional career might have brought him. His nationalist activities cost him his business, professional opportunities, physical health, and financial security. He died on 18 November 1936 at the age of 64. Although he had passed away before India achieved independence, his contribution remained an important part of Tamil Nadu's freedom movement. His popular title, Kappalottiya Tamizhan, became inseparable from his identity.

V.O.C.'s legacy is remembered in several ways. The former Tuticorin Port was renamed V.O. Chidambaranar Port, and the Government of India issued a commemorative postage stamp in 1972 to mark his birth centenary. Statues and memorials have also been erected in Tamil Nadu. (Wikipedia)

His life has also been remembered in literature and cinema. Ma. Po. Sivagnanam's biography, Kappalottiya Tamizhan, played a key role in bringing his story to a wider Tamil readership, while the 1961 Tamil film of the same name introduced it to another generation. (Wikipedia) Today, V.O.C.'s story has renewed relevance, as the ideas behind his Swadeshi movement—self-reliance, indigenous enterprise, economic independence and the dignity of labour—continue to resonate in discussions about India's economic development.

V. O. Chidambaram Pillai holds a unique place in India's freedom struggle. He was not merely a political agitator. He was a lawyer who became a nationalist, an entrepreneur who challenged a colonial monopoly, a leader who stood with workers, and a patriot who endured brutal imprisonment.

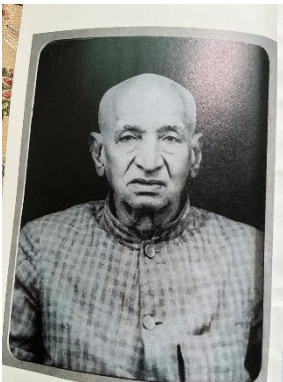
His greatest achievement was perhaps not the number of ships that sailed under the Swadeshi flag. It was the confidence he instilled in Indians that they could challenge an immensely powerful colonial economic system. His life teaches a powerful lesson: freedom is not merely political independence; it also requires economic self-reliance and the courage to build one's own institutions.

The ships of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company eventually disappeared from the seas, but the idea behind them endured. V.O.C. had shown that an Indian could challenge British commercial power on the very waters through which the Empire projected its economic strength. Generations of Tamils have remembered him with affection and pride as “Kappalottiya Tamizhan” — the Tamil Helmsman. His life remains an enduring reminder that patriotism is most powerful when courage is put into action.

M G Vasuddevaiah (Salem Gandhi) - Tamil Nadu

This article is authored by S Narendra, Former Information Advisor to Prime Ministers of India

Modur Gundayya Vasudevaiah (Salem Gandhi), a close associate of Rajaji, fought British rule through liquor shop picketing, jail fasts, Dalit welfare, Swadeshi education, and establishing the Salem Bank.



I had the privilege of getting the blessings of my wife's maternal grandfather Modur Gundayya Vasudevai, at my marriage in Mysore in 1969. He was a tall, erect, frail man with a dark complexion. A man of few words: he blessed us by chanting some mantra. I did not know then that I was bowing before a legacy-Vasudevai and myself, separated by over 60 years in age, had participated at two ends of the freedom movement.

Rajaji or C. Rajagopalachari, the Gandhian scholar and philosopher, and Vasudevai were contemporaries in Bangalore Central College and later became Lawyer-partners in Salem. When Rajaji became Chairman of the

Salem Town Municipality, his former classmate became active in Salem civic life, including in Salem's expansion and worked on improving civic amenities like drinking water wells, opening schools particularly for Dalit children. When the Municipality ran out of money to start this school, Vasudeviah borrowed money by pledging a part of the land he owned.

தேசபக்தர் வாசுதேவய்யா

பிழம்பெரும் தேசபக்தர் எம். ஜி. வாசுதேவையா தமது தொண்ணூற்று ஐந்தாவது வயதில், சேலத்தில் சமீபத்தில் அமரத்துவம் அடைந்தார்.

இவர் வருடம் ஒத்துழையாமை இயக்கத்தைக் காந்திஜி தொடங்கியபோது தமது வக்கீல் தொழிலை நிறுத்தி நாட்டுப் பணியில் ஈடுபட்டார்.

சேலம் நகரவாசிகள் அவரைச் "சேலத்தின் காந்தி" என்று அக்காலத்தில் அழைத்தார்கள். சர்க்கார் உத்தரவை மீறிக் கள்ளுக்கடை மறியலில் ஈடுபட்டு ஒரு கள்ளுக்கடை மூன்றால் இவர் சிவ்நிறுத்தப்போது குதிரைப் போலீஸார் இவரை விவசாயப் போரும்படி கட்டளை இட்டார்கள். இவர் அதைப் பொருட்படுத்தவில்லை. போலீஸ் குதிரைகள் இவரைக் கீழே தள்ளி மிதித்தன. இவர் பிறகு சிறைப்பட்டுக் கோயமுத்தூர் மத்திய சிறையில் இருந்தார். ஏப்ரல் மாதத்தின் ஒரு தேதியை ஒரு காலத்தில் ஜாவியன்வாலாபாக் படுகொலை தினமாக உபவாசம் இருந்து கொண்டிருவது அக்காலத்திய மரபு. எம்.ஜி. வாசுதேவையா அவர்களும் உண்ணாவிரதம் இருக்க விரும்பினர். அதிகாரிகள் ஆட்சேபித்தார்கள். ஆட்சேபணையைப் பொருட்படுத்தாமல் வாசுதேவையா உண்ணாவிரதம் இருந்தார். அதிகாரிகள் சினந்து அவரைச் செக்கு இழுக்குமாறு உத்தரவிட்டனர். அவர் தன்

டீயையை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டார். அதற்குப் பத்து வருஷங்களுக்கு முன்னு் வ.உ.சி.க்கு நடந்ததை நினைத்து அன்றிரை திருப்பி நடத்திக் காண்ப்பதில் மகாத்மா காந்தியின் 'யங் இந்தியா' பத்திரிகையிலும் இதைப் பற்றிய செய்தி விமரிசிக்கப்பட்டது.

இவருடைய தியாகத்தை மறிக்கும் முறையில் தமிழக காங்கிரஸ் இவரைத் திருப்பூரில் நடந்த மாகாண மகாநாட்டுக்குத் தலைவராகத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்தனர்.

ராஜாஜி கவர்னர் தென்காசிப் பதவியை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டதும் புன்காங்கிதம் அடைந்த வாசுதேவையா, "நீங்கள் எவ்வளவோ தியாகம் செய்தீர்கள். நீங்கள் இந்தப் பதவியைப் பெற்றது குறித்து நான் மகிழ்ச்சி அடைகிறேன்" என்று எழுதியிருந்தார்.

அதற்கு ராஜாஜி தம் கைப்பட ஆங்கிலத்தில், "நீங்கள் செய்யாத எந்தத் தியாகத்தையும் செய்துவிட்டேன்? எனக்கு இந்தப் பதவியில் மகிழ்ச்சி இல்லை. ஆனால் நீங்கள் மகிழ்ச்சி அடைந்தீர்கள் என்பது எனக்கு இன்பத்தை அளிக்கிறது" என்று உருக்கமாக எழுதிய பதில் ஒரு கண்ணாடி பிரேமில் போட்டு வாசுதேவையா தம் வீட்டின் கவரில் மாட்டியிருந்ததை எங்களுக்குப் போன வருஷம் காண்பித்த உருக்கமான காட்சி இப்போதும் என் கண் முன் நிற்கிறது.

— எ. சி. ஆர். நரையணம்

54

கல்கி

சுனந்த வாராசி 11
மே 25, 1975

Grandfather's Obituary in Tamil Magazine

Sometime in the 1920s, when Rajaji responded to Gandhiji's call for launching the Non-Violence movement against British rule, his close associates in Salem, including Vasudeviah, jumped in. In the Madras Presidency, the British had a monopoly over the alcohol trade, including local brews. Vasudeviah joined Rajaji in picketing liquor shops. The authorities deployed horse-mounted police against the peaceful protesters. Vasudeviah dared them by lying down on the ground. After beating him, he was taken to Coimbatore jail. Vasudeviah's young wife and little kids did not come to know of this for several days.

While in jail, Vasudeviah heard of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and went on a fast in protest. The Jail authorities punished him by using him, in place of a bullock, to extract edible oil from the traditional Ghani or Chekku. His fasts in jail and his defiance of cruel treatment drew Gandhiji's attention. When his story appeared in Gandhiji's *Young India*, the government extended Vasudeviah's imprisonment to six more months.

Coming out of jail, He was chosen to lead the Madras Provincial Congress Conference in Tirupur. He was an ardent advocate of ending caste and class discrimination. He donated six acres of land for housing Dalits, then referred to as Panchamas, in the village of Kannanguruchi.

Drawn into the Swadeshi movement, Vasudeviah and others (VVS Iyer, E.V Ramaswamy Naicker, Dr P Varadarajalu Naidu) set up Gurukulam as an alternative to

British education. He was among the persons who started the Gandhi Asram in Tiruchengode Taluk to promote cottage industries, including production of Khadi cloth.



A significant move in the Swadeshi movement was to offer loans to Indian farmers and cottage industries, who had no access to British bank funds. Vasudeviah and N.RamaRao founded a Chit Fund with their own savings (1925). From this emerged the Salem Bank with the founders investing Rs 100 each as initial share capital. Vasudeviah was chosen to lead the Bank as its Managing Director and Secretary. His first principle was to maintain the financial integrity of

the Bank. They hired young men who could not continue their education beyond high school. He managed to open over 20 bank branches. Vasudeviah's leadership was recognised by making him the Convener of the first Joint Stock Bank conference in South India. He and his brother M.G Rangiah (who became the chief engineer of princely Mysore state and one of the engineers associated with the building of the Krishnaraja Sagar Dam) designed and built the iconic Salem Bank head office building and the Town's first clock tower. For this latter project, Vasudeviah gave his own funds.

Vasudeviah was an experienced farmer who grew cotton and used it to spin Khadi yarn. He also developed a coconut grove as well. He wore only Khadi clothes. His love of English and Tamil literature led him to found the local Literary Society. By nature, he was a strict disciplinarian as well as devoutly religious, studying Vedic literature and would not have lunch without sandhya vandanam and Puja.

In 1975, when he was offered freedom fighters' pension as part of the Silver Jubilee of Indian independence, Vasudeviah rejected the pension. Soon after, he passed away at the age of 94.

Strangely, my family was deeply engaged with the Quit India movement and the post-Independence Mysore Chalo movement to persuade the Maharaja to accede to the Indian Union. My sister went to jail for a short time. My schoolmates and I had taken out processions shouting Vande Mataram, Bharat Mata ki Jai.

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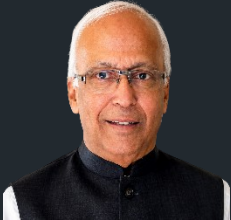
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About the Book

Freedom Fighters of India – Volume 3 is a seminal compilation of historical columns published in the esteemed eMagazine *PreSense* from September 2024 to August 2026. Published by the Prime Point Foundation to mark India's 80th Independence Day, this volume unearths the inspiring narratives of 23 valiant, unsung heroes who fiercely resisted British colonial rule. Spanning diverse geographies—from the rugged hills of Mizoram to the rural heartlands of Haryana—this open-access digital book highlights early grassroots rebellions, armed resistance, and tribal uprisings. It serves as a vital educational repository designed to foster historical awareness and deep civic pride among today's youth.

About the Author



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