



YOJANA

SPECIAL ISSUE

AUGUST 2024

A DEVELOPMENT MONTHLY

Dawn of Freedom





Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.
Rig Veda

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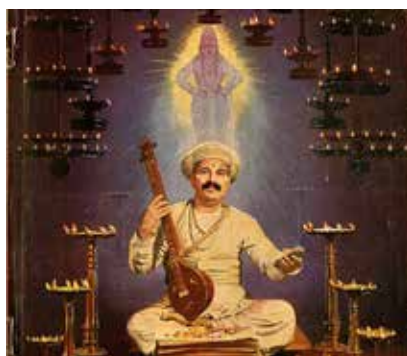
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YOJANA is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Legends Untold: Rediscovering India's Unknown Freedom Fighters

In the fabric of India's history, the concept of *Kartavya Kaal* emerges as a poignant reminder of the duty and commitment that defined the actions of lesser-known freedom fighters. Their selflessness and sacrifice during the struggle for independence resonate with a timeless call to acknowledge our responsibilities towards the nation. The *Kartavya Kaal* symbolises a legacy of unwavering dedication and serves as a beacon for us to uphold the values of resilience, unity, and collective progress.

These heroes from various regions of India embodied the spirit of sacrifice and dedication to a shared dream of freedom. While their names may not adorn monuments, their courage and resolve continue to reverberate through history. This Independence Day, let us honour these unsung champions by embracing our own sense of duty, pledging to uphold the ideals they fought for, and ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

India is currently witnessing a profound resurgence of pride in its rich cultural heritage and traditions. The transformative influence of poetry and music in fostering nationalism cannot be overstated; they have served as enduring sources of inspiration across generations. Literature, as a catalyst for social change, stands as a testament to the profound impact of artistic expression on societal transformation.

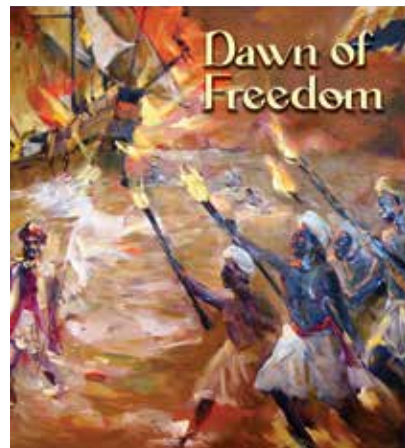
The hardships endured by political prisoners, facing severe punishments and resorting to hunger strikes in their pursuit of justice, illuminate the unwavering spirit of those dedicated to the principles of freedom and equality. Their sacrifices serve as a powerful testament to the profound costs of upholding cherished ideals.

Reflecting on historical milestones, the pivotal role of newspapers during India's struggle for independence emerges as a cornerstone of the nation's journey towards self-determination. Visionary leaders like Gandhiji and Sardar Patel continue to inspire and guide us in our pursuit of a more just and equitable society, their legacies intricately woven into the fabric of our country's history.

Northeast India, with its rich cultural diversity and breathtaking natural beauty, has often been overlooked in mainstream narratives of India's fight for independence. Recent endeavours to explore the untold stories of this region reveal a tapestry of courage, sacrifice and resilience that matches, if not surpasses, the tales of heroism from other parts of the country. The freedom struggle in Northeast India was not just a reaction to colonial oppression, it was a nuanced resistance intertwined with local histories and traditions. From the plains of Assam to the hills of Manipur, and from the verdant valleys of Meghalaya to the rugged terrains of Arunachal Pradesh, each corner of the region has its own narrative of defiance against British rule.

The stories of lesser-known heroes who played pivotal roles in Gujarat's contributions to India's independence are uncovered in the pages that follow. Gujarat's historical tapestry, interwoven with narratives of bravery and self-sacrifice, bears testament to the unwavering spirit of its people and their steadfast dedication to the nation's cause.

In conclusion, this edition of Yojana delves into multifaceted narratives of cultural resurgence, political resilience, and historical legacies. It features insightful articles contributed by subject-matter experts, researchers, and academics, offering a comprehensive exploration of themes central to India's past, present, and future. This issue serves not only to inform but also to inspire a deeper appreciation for the diverse tapestry of India's history and the enduring spirit that continues to shape its trajectory. □



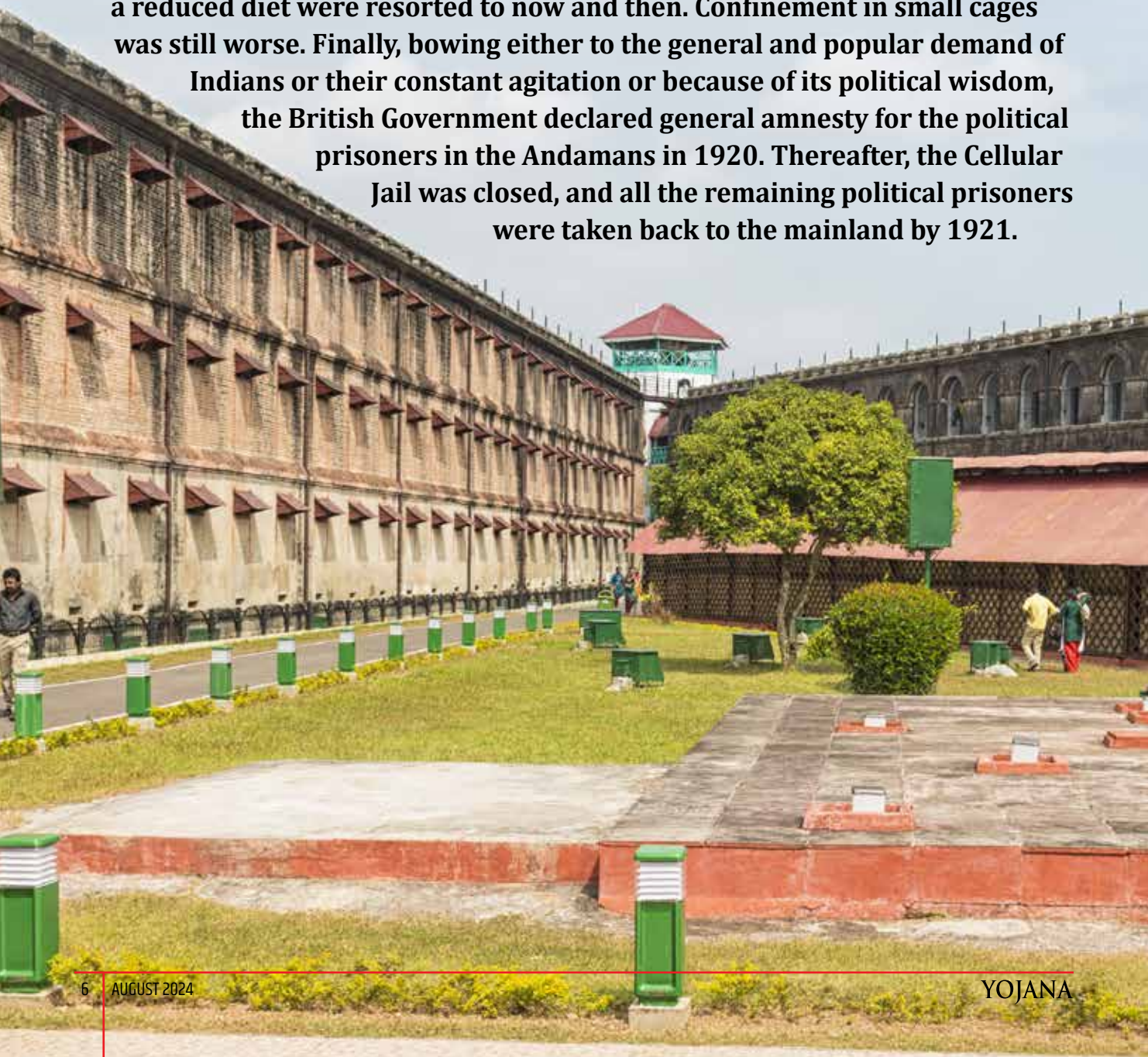
CELLULAR JAIL

The Saga of Resistance

AMIT ROY

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The revolutionaries in the Cellular Jail were not treated as political prisoners. They were called 'seditionists' or 'anarchists' and treated worse than ordinary criminals. The political prisoners were frequently punished. Flogging, confinement in cells for six months, bar fetters, and standing handcuffs with a reduced diet were resorted to now and then. Confinement in small cages was still worse. Finally, bowing either to the general and popular demand of Indians or their constant agitation or because of its political wisdom, the British Government declared general amnesty for the political prisoners in the Andamans in 1920. Thereafter, the Cellular Jail was closed, and all the remaining political prisoners were taken back to the mainland by 1921.



If someone is to pick one of the greatest monuments in the country dedicated to India's freedom and nationhood, that has to be the Cellular Jail. Located in Port Blair, the main city of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, off at least a thousand kilometres from the mainland, the isolated prison in the middle of the sea became the favourite place for the incarceration of revolutionary freedom fighters.

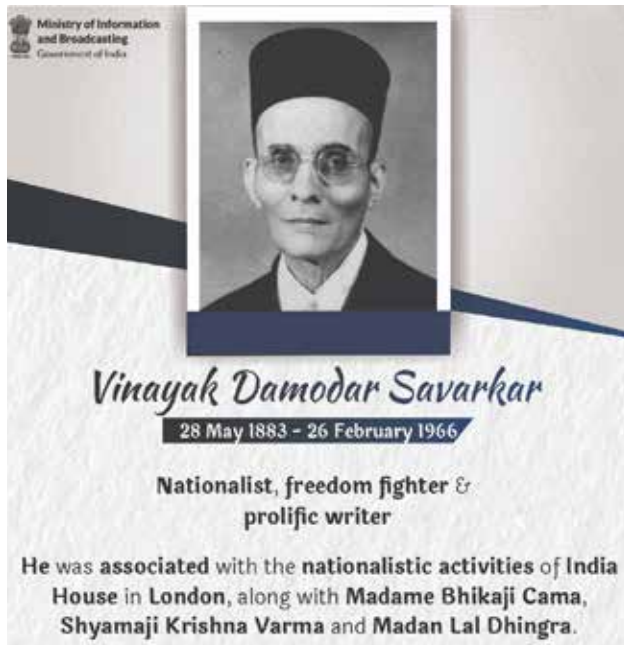
A proposal on the Tentative Lists of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, submitted in April 2014, mentions the Cellular Jail is in the league of similar facilities built during the same reign of the erstwhile British Empire, such as the World Heritage Sites, of Robben Island, South Africa, and Australian Convict Sites. In other global comparisons, Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, USA, presents a comparable example for Cellular Jail. The architecture of Eastern State Penitentiary is based on the principles of separate system and also influenced by panopticon theory, similar to the planning of Cellular Jail.

The Cellular Jail prison complex was constructed between 1896 and 1906 in Port Blair by deploying prisoners as labourers. Port Blair, named after Archibald Blair of the British East India Company, was itself a penal colony on Great Andaman, established in 1789.

The British appointed David Barrie as their Jailor during 1905-1919. Barrie unleashed a reign of terror on the inmates, particularly the revolutionaries. They were not classified as political prisoners but as 'seditionists' or 'anarchists' and were treated worse than ordinary criminals. They were given class 'D' (Dangerous) or 'PI' (Permanently Incarcerated) badges.

Revolutionary freedom fighters incarcerated here came from all corners of mainland India—from Bengal to Maharashtra and northern Punjab to the then Madras Presidency.





In this article, we revisit the tyranny and brutality during the tenure of Jailer Barrie, based on the accounts of various freedom fighters whose names are now etched in glory in the roll of honour on the walls of Cellular Jail.

1909: The first batch of political prisoners arrive

The vessel *Maharaja* took the first batch of political prisoners from Calcutta—the convicted ones (seven in this batch), the revolutionaries of the Alipore Bomb case—to the Andamans. They reached the Cellular Jail on 15 December 1909.

The revolutionaries in fetters were led to the Cellular Jail on foot with beds over their heads and utensils in hand. The big iron gates gulped them. They were taken to the open courtyard. David Barrie, an Irishman was the head overseer, and the jailer—a terror with a short height and a round football-like body structure, ‘a bull dog’ in appearance, claiming to ‘tame the lions’—appeared in front of the newcomers.

After inspecting the line of political convicts, a terrifying lecture was delivered by Barrie to the new inmates. Barin Ghosh, among the first revolutionaries confined to the Cellular Jail recalled, “Do you see me? My name is D Barrie. I am a most obedient servant to the simple and straightforward, but to the crooked, I am four times as crooked. If you disobey me, may God help you; at least I will not, that is certain.

Remember also that God does not come within three miles of Port Blair.”

Legendary freedom fighter and a celebrated inmate of the Cellular Jail, VD Savarkar also mentions the first despotic address of Barrie, who said, “Listen, ye prisoners. In the universe, there is one God, and He lives in the heavens above. But in Port Blair, there are two: one, the God of Heaven, and another, the God of Earth. Indeed, the God of Earth in Port Blair is myself. The God of Heaven will reward you when you go above. But this God of Port Blair will reward you right here and now.”

Savarkar calls Barrie a despot and oppressor who was assisted by warders, petty officers, *tindals*, and *jamadars*. The warders and petty officers were all rough, hardy Pathans who took full advantage to abuse, humiliate, and ill-treat the political prisoners and even slap them on the slightest pretext of indiscipline.

The revolutionaries in the Cellular Jail were not treated as political prisoners. They were called ‘seditionists’ or ‘anarchists’ and treated worse than ordinary criminals. The food was inadequate and unhealthy. They were not permitted to talk with one another.

There were various tasks for which convicts were confined in the Cellular Jail. Among them, the hardest ones were extracting oil from coconuts and mustard seeds, husking and opening coconuts, and making ropes with the fibres of coconuts.

The manual *kohlu*-plying, i.e., oil-grinding, was the hardest work. Instead of bullocks, the prisoners were yoked to the handle of the mill, and they moved around it continuously. Prisoners were to work until 30 pounds of coconut oil or 10 pounds of mustard oil were produced. Those who failed to complete their quota were subjected to kicks and fisticuffs besides caning. If many of them could not complete the quota allotted to them for the day, Barrie would come on the scene. When the exhausted and hungry workers were all sitting down for their evening meal, Barrie announced to the assembly that none would get anything to eat till he had finished his quota. Barrie would then bring his chair into the chawl, sit upon it with a cigar in his mouth, and doze for some time. Everywhere was the stillness of night, but the mill groaned on till 8 or 9 pm.

1911: Beginning of the Resistance and the first strike in Cellular Jail

The year was 1911. The voice of resistance was raised by a Punjabi prisoner, Nand Gopal, who was sentenced to ten years for writing 'seditious' articles in his weekly *Swarajya*. He staged passive resistance against working on the *Kohlu*. On that particular day, Nand Gopal started the work of grinding on the oil mill slowly without caring about fulfilling his oil extraction quota. He worked till the bell rang for meals, although even one-third of his allotted work was not yet over. Thereafter, Nand Gopal took a bath and sat down to have his meals. Nand Gopal had taken three or four morsels. The officials abused him for wasting time, but he just ignored them. The warder and petty officer shouted, "*Chalo, kaam tumhara baap karega? Utho!*". Nand Gopal continued having his food. He ignored the order. Ultimately, Barrie arrived on the scene. Barrie, the dreaded one, shouted at Nand Gopal and threatened him with flogging. But the latter replied that he was not sitting idle and only chewing the food. This enraged Barrie, and he shouted that Nand Gopal would be punished for violating the rules. Nand Gopal told

Barrie that 10 am to 12 noon was the time to rest, and by deploying wretched prisoners on work during the recess period, he himself was violating the rules. Barrie felt insulted. He threatened Nand Gopal, ordered him to complete his work, and left the place in state of a grumpiness. For the first time, Barrie felt the erosion of his authority.

Nand Gopal was punished. He was given a reduced diet, but it did not dissuade him. Finally, Barrie came to a compromise with Nand Gopal. But after a few days, he was again assigned work at the *kohlu*. He challenged the authorities that he would not work in the *kohlu* as he was a human being and not a bullock. It was an open act of insubordination. Nand Gopal was put in chains and fetters. A general order was issued that everybody would have to work on the oil mill for three days. This created a stir among other prisoners to fight for their rights.

The prisoners refused to work on the mill. Thus, the strike began. Rigorous measures were adopted by the authorities to punish the strikers. The strikers were handcuffed. They were kept in solitary confinement. Several forms of punishment were





imposed on them, one after the other. But they did not break. Finally, the authorities relented and assured them they would work outside the jail with no work on the oil mills. It was the first major victory of the political prisoners in the whole epic struggle.

1912: Virtual hell, a suicide and another inmate loses sanity

The Cellular Jail became a virtual hell for the political prisoners. The tedious labour, insults, and humiliation they were subjected to had exhausted them. To get rid of such a life, Indubhusan Roy committed suicide on the night of 28 April 1912 by tearing his shirt, making a rope out of it and hanging himself from the skylight.

He was one of those who were sent out to work. But he found the work outside more fatiguing and humiliating than the labour inside. He had thought he would be given some concessions, but instead, he found that he had more rigorous work to do in the settlement. Indubhusan was fed up with it and returned to the jail of his own accord; chains were put on his arms and hands. He was punished for his obstinacy. Barrie ordered the jamadar, "Put him on the oil mill, and at once." Indubhusan was immediately marched off to work on the *Kohlu*. Savarkar writes, "Every evening I saw Indubhusan returning from the *Kohlu* dead tired, with perspiration on his face, the chaff of the coconut clinging like sawdust to his body from top to toe, chains clanging on his feet, a weight of 30 pounds on his head, and a sack of chaffs on his shoulder. I saw him coming up bent under this weight and staggering to the place.... Indubhusan was the first political prisoner to put an end to his life thus."

Ullaskar Dutta was a jovial fellow. He too fell victim to the unbearable torture that led to insanity.

On 10 June 1912, he was chained and suspended in his cell for a week. On the first day, he was found hanging, handcuffed, with an acute fever and signs of insanity. His heart-rending cries filled the whole atmosphere. The officiating superintendent sent him to the mental hospital in the Andamans and later on to the Madras Lunatic Asylum in January 1913.

Ullaskar himself writes, "I was yoked to the oil mill similar to those we see in India for crushing oil from coconut and sesame. It is the bullock that is made to run the grinding mill in India. And, even the bullock cannot turn out more than 16 pounds of mustard seed oil during the day. In the Andaman Jail, men were yoked to the handle of the turning wheel instead of bullocks, and it was imposed upon them to yield, by their hard day's work, 30 pounds of coconut oil. ...We were made to run around the oil mill unlike the bullock which could plod on slowly. If any one of us was found to slacken his pace, the jamadar was in attendance to belabour him with his big stick. If that slamming did not accelerate the pace, he was tied hand and foot to the handle of the turning wheel, and others were ordered to run at full speed. Then, the poor man was dragged along the ground like a man tied to the chariot wheel. His body would get bruised. His head knocked on the floor and bruised."

Ullaskar was sent outside with others in the settlement to work. He was assigned the hardest work to do. He had to climb up a steep ascent, draw two buckets of water out of a well, tie them at both ends of a pole, and carry the buckets with the pole on his shoulders to the bungalow of an officer. The work had to be repeated for the whole day, going up and down the steep climb. At last, he was fed up with this work and refused to do it any longer.

Ullaskar writes, "The more we toiled, the more they made us toil. Let them do their worst to our bodies; let us, at least, keep our souls free. They may rule over my body, but I am the master of my soul. I shall not be enslaved to hard labour, and I was sent back to be locked up again in my cell. The same Silver Jail, the same dreaded jailer Barrie standing near the gate! As soon as he saw me, he roared, 'This is not an open field; beware, this is a prison house. If you go against its discipline, I will thrash you with my cane. I will give you thirty lashes, each of which will go deep into your flesh.' I answered, 'You may

cut my body to pieces. I am no longer going to work here, for I think that to work according to your orders is a crime against my conscience.' Instantly, Barrie ordered that chains should be put upon my hands and I should be suspended by them in my own cell for a week, continuously."

Ullaskar subsequently recalled the cruel treatment meted out to him by giving him electric battery shocks. "The electric current went through my whole body like the force of lightning. Every nerve, fibre, and muscle seemed to be torn by it."

1912: The second general strike

The suicide of Indubhusan and the insanity of Ullaskar led to the second general strike. A charter of demands, which included proper food, release from hard labour, and freedom of mixing with each other, was placed before the authority. The strike began. Again, repressive measures, like standing handcuffs and cross-fetters were resorted to. A cut in diet was also ordered. The strikers were separated and locked up in one block under the supervision of hefty Pathan warders.

The political prisoners refused to stand up as a mark of respect upon the arrival of Barrie. The abusive language used by the jail officers was met with even more forceful language in return. Nani Gopal of Chinsurah was on a hunger strike for 72 days. Though he was exhausted and helpless

after fasting for more than a month and a half, the authorities did not hesitate to hang him up by the handcuffs. Finally, the strike came to an end on 6 December 1912. The political prisoners were then given some relief and concessions. They got permission from the jail superintendent to get books into the prison. The jail authorities even permitted the political prisoners to sit together, read books, or hold discussions, but their duties continued, and they were asked not to resort to strikes or agitations.

An official of high rank, the Home Member of the Governor-General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, visited the Andamans in October 1913. Many of the leading political prisoners appeared before him, and without caring about the consequent punishments, they openly accused the jail authorities regarding the deprivation of their rights. But the jail authorities were in no mood to accept any of their legitimate demands. The political prisoners again resorted to another strike in March 1914. All sorts of punishments were exhausted, but the strike was not withdrawn. Ultimately, the then Government of India took a final decision on the fate of the political prisoners in the Andamans in April 1914.

In pursuance of the notification of the Government of India, all the term convicts except Pulin Behari Das were repatriated to Indian jails.





The prisoners were brought back in three batches, leaving the Andamans on 23 May 1914 for Calcutta, 18 June 1914 and 10 September 1914 for Madras.

1915-1917: Brutal jailer Barrie gets it back

The *Ghadr* movement to overthrow British rule in India failed in 1915. Many of the conspirators were transported to the Andamans after being convicted and sentenced in the Lahore Conspiracy Cases and others.

The Ghadrites were greeted by Barrie, who had already decided that the 'bombwalas' who were asking for *swaraj* would get hard treatment in the oil mill. These newcomers had also been deployed in the hard work of coconut pounding. If the quota was not completed, they were abused and humiliated.

The political prisoners were frequently punished. Flogging, confinement in cells for six months, bar fetters, and standing handcuffs with a reduced diet were resorted to now and then. Confinement in small cages was still worse. Master Chattar Singh, Amar Singh, Jawala Singh, and Lal Singh were confined in such cages for years. They were all destined to receive the same savage treatment at the hands of the unrelenting David Barrie. Chattar Singh had to remain confined in a cage for a number of years, for which ultimately Sohan Singh Bhakna resorted to a hunger strike and got Chattar Singh released from confinement.

Ram Rakha Sasoli, of the second Mandalay Conspiracy case, had been sent for life transportation to the Andamans in 1917. His religious thread (*janeu*) was removed. In protest, Ram Rakha went

on a hunger strike and fought for it till his death.

Barrie remained as vindictive towards the new batch. Now, he became more revengeful because of his early disconcertment. He used to incite the warders and petty officers against the political prisoners. At the slightest pretext, the warders and petty officers would hurl abuses and were ready to use their rods.

On the very next day, Parmanand Jhansi refused to work in the *Kohlu*, saying he could not do the task. Shocked by the flat refusal by the prisoner to work, the *tandeel* at once took him to the Jailor in his office for getting him adequate punishment. David Barrie started abusing him. Jhansi told him not to hurl abuses, but Barrie continued. Jhansi then retaliated. Barrie was taken aback. He became more furious and raised his hand to strike Jhansi. However, before he could do so, Jhansi kicked Barrie on the belly. Barrie fell down and cried, on which the minions caught hold of Jhansi. The *tandeels* and jamadars gave Jhansi a sound thrashing till he began to bleed in the head. He was then taken to the hospital in an unconscious state.

Jhansi was confined in his cell. A regular inquiry was held, and lastly, Major Murray, the superintendent, ordered twenty lashes to be administered to the patriot. Every stroke made a deep cut on his body, and soon his body was a mass of lacerated flesh. But Parmanand did not flinch. He was also sentenced to solitary confinement for six months with fetters. He endured all the physical and mental torture, but he had challenged Barrie's autocratic authority and proclaimed loudly that the jail officials could not take the law into themselves.

This treatment sent shock waves among the political prisoners. They decided to protest and resorted to a general strike. Barrie was defensive and explained his position to the convicts, trying to win them over by pleading that it was all Paramanand's fault. The Superintendent of Jail, Major Murray, assured the convicts that such incidents would not be repeated. He assured them of the limit of their work and that the sentence awarded to Paramanand would be withdrawn. On this assurance, the strike was called off by the prisoners.

However, the authorities backed out, and Jhansi's sentence was not withdrawn. The convicts waited for one month and then resorted to striking on 13 January 1916. Each of them was sentenced

to solitary confinement for six months with fetters and standing handcuffs for weeks. Their diet was also reduced.

The political prisoners, like their predecessors, decided to resist the dismal state of affairs through open disobedience. They had the greatest contempt for Barrie and his subordinates; they would neither stand up in his presence nor speak to him with respect, all of which made Barrie burn with indignation.

In February 1917, Baba Bhan Singh was showing his day's work to the officials. He was insulted and abused by the British constable. Bhan Singh, too, replied to his abuses. He was produced before the jail superintendent, who, without hearing, awarded him fetters and confinement for six months. He was given a reduced diet, standing handcuffs, and was also locked in his cell. Reacting to such an unjust punishment, Bhan Singh stopped standing up for the jailer. Barrie reprimanded Baba Bhan Singh on a couple of occasions under one pretext or another, but Baba Bhan Singh ignored it. One day, in June 1917, Baba Bhan Singh, who was locked in his cell, was singing with full devotion and loudly. He was also banging on his handcuffs. Barrie passed by and abused him. Bhan Singh responded with equal fervour. At that time, the jail was locked up, and all was quiet and calm. The prisoners could listen to this exchange of abuses. When Barrie realised that the loud abuses by Bhan Singh were being heard all over the jail and would lower his self-esteem, he called the jamadars and asked them to give Baba Bhan Singh such a severe beating so that he would not utter a word. A number of convict warders entered his cell and beat Baba Bhan Singh until he became unconscious. Baba Bhan Singh, who in the meantime had been admitted to the hospital, did not recover and expired within a month.

There was no chance of coordination among the prisoners because they were spread out in the cells in seven blocks, with many of them locked up for days together. However, they set up a system of communication among themselves by sending small chits of paper to one another through the ordinary prisoners, who were relatively free to move about from one block to another. They decided that the only way open to them was non-cooperative resistance through strikes. The bugle was blown.

Many of the political prisoners also joined the strike. Each of the strikers was penalised with bar fetters, standing handcuffs, and solitary confinement for six months with reduced ration.

The duration of the strike had exhausted the jail authorities. The government's frequent inquiries embarrassed them. They were also feeling a total loss of respect in jail. Finally, they agreed to assign light work to the political prisoners of their choice, provided they called off the strike and resumed work. They also agreed to consider other demands of the political prisoners. Finally, the strike was called off.

Post-1917: End of a despot

Barrie's ego had been crushed after this chapter. Once, the self-styled 'God' of Port Blair was now a rejected 'piece of stone'. There was a total change in the attitude of the authorities. Efforts were made by the authorities to avoid any trouble or confrontation with the political prisoners. They were assigned light work. The oil mills were now lying idle. The reading of books, newspapers, or even meeting and talking with prisoners among themselves was not objected to.

Barrie fell ill, and he was sanctioned leave. He boarded the ship with the support of four people, and later on, he died in mainland India. The long history of the barbaric villain of the Andaman Cellular Jail ends here.

Finally, bowing either to the general and popular demand of Indians or their constant agitation or because of its political wisdom, the British Government declared general amnesty for the political prisoners in the Andamans in 1920. Thereafter, the Cellular Jail was closed, and all the remaining political prisoners were taken back to the mainland by 1921. □

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Rani Abbakka: The Unyielding Guardian of Sovereignty and Justice

The 17th century Italian traveller Pietro Dalla Valle's accounts provide a vivid portrayal of Rani Abbakka, who, despite her humble appearance, commanded immense respect and authority. Engaged in irrigation projects and other public works, she exemplified a ruler dedicated to her people's welfare. She was known for her equitable rule and concern for her subjects' welfare. Abbakka fostered an inclusive governance model, transcending caste and religious distinctions. Her governance model, characterised by direct involvement in various administrative sectors, serves as a beacon for contemporary leaders. Abbakka's constant war against the Portuguese was marked by her commitment to her principality. Her resistance extended beyond the Portuguese, facing challenges from Keladi Venkatappa Nayaka later on.

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The narrative of Indian history is replete with instances of foreign invasions, looting and robbery, which continued unabated since the dawn of civilisation. From the Greeks to the period of the British, there have been invasions and onslaughts which had destabilised the existence of the land. The advent of European powers towards the end of 15th century disrupted India's political, economic and cultural fabric, making it a hotbed of conflict. More so in the coastal belt of Karnataka, the gateway of the trade route, the Tulunadu. Tulunadu is a region in south-western India that lies in the northern part of coastal Kerala. The discovery of the sea route by the Portuguese to this region had a massive impact on the maritime activities of the coastal belt, leading

to socio-economic, cultural and political collision in Tulunadu.

The Alupa dynasty, one of the ancient dynasties of Karnataka, ruled over Tulunadu for over a thousand years, from around the 2nd century to 14th century AD. Tulunadu came under the rule of the Vijayanagara Empire in the later part of the 14th century and continued up to the later half of the 16th century. During this period, fourteen minor dynasties such as the Banghas of Bangadi, Ajilas of Venuru, Bairarasa of Karkala, Savanthas of Mulki, Dombaheggade of Vittala, Tolaharas of Suraal, Rajas of Kumble, Chowtas of Puttige, Kellas, Moolas of Byelangadi, Honneyakambalis of Hosangadi, and the Saluvas of Gerusoppe emerged. Wars and proxy



wars, agreements and disagreements were the regular feature among these minor rulers.

Taking advantage of the situation, the Portuguese in the coastal belt commenced their activities by building forts and ports. Forts for defence and ports for trade were the bottom line of this venture. They started levying cartazes (sailing permits) for the ships entering the sea and implemented taxes for the crops. Ullala had not attracted Portuguese attention until the second decade of the 16th century. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Chautas ruled the region from Ullala and Puttige. They were then the feudatories of the Vijayanagara emperors.

Like most of the royal families of Tulunadu, who followed the matriarchal (*Aliyakattu*) system, a branch of the Chautas ruled from Ullala. From the 13th century to the mid-18th century, five Abbakka queens are mentioned in connection with this branch. It could be suggested that the

name 'Abbakka' might have been a title or the family name rather than the first name. The queen followed Jainism but had an integrated army and administrative set-up of people from all religions. Portuguese and Italian records provide information about two queens who ruled Ullala from the mid-16th century to the early 17th century, clearly identifying them as mother and daughter. The elder Abbakka reigned from 1554 to 1588, during which she fiercely opposed Portuguese political and trade maneuvers. There were constant conflicts between the elder Abbakka and the Portuguese regarding politics and business transactions. She fought three important battles in 1556, 1558 and 1567. In the war of 1567, Abbakka displayed extraordinary power but was ultimately defeated by the Portuguese. Despite the fact that she did not win the battle, her gallantry was much praised by contemporary Portuguese writers such as Francisco D'Souza, Couto Diogo and others. She maintained an alliance with the Zamorin of Calicut, thereby

preventing the Portuguese from fully realising their ambitions.

The Portuguese document from 1589 refers to a reign of the king in Ullala. His rule lasted from 1588 to 1594. The details of this king are not available in contemporary records.

The younger Abbakka ruled from 1594 to 1640. The younger Abbakka, after ascending to power in 1594, marked a golden era in the coastal belt. Ullala's conflict with the Portuguese over trade and the tribute issue persisted. She continued the struggle against the Portuguese, seeking to avenge her mother's defeat.

To counter Portuguese dominance, Abbakka allied with the Zamorin of Calicut and Malabar kings, ensuring her trade with Arab countries remained secure. In 1617, the capture of one of her ships returning from Mecca by the Portuguese provoked Abbakka to retaliate by attacking the Mangalore Fort. She took the aid of Keladi Venkatappa Nayaka. Portuguese historian Danvares writes, "Venkatappa's Army came to her help from above the Ghat. The Banghas capitals of Bangady and Nandavar were taken over. Mangalore was annexed. She defeated both the Portuguese and the Bangha King. Bangha was allied with the Portuguese. Portuguese admirals such as Miranda and D'mello ran away. 200 Portuguese soldiers were slain". Abbakka's role was huge in supporting her army. It was a massive setback for the Portuguese, who had modern warfare means, while Abbakka had indigenous weapons. Her guerrilla war tactic led her to victory.

The news of her triumph had reached beyond the seven seas, establishing it as an epoch-making event in history. Thereafter, the Portuguese refrained from intervening in the region's affairs and retaliating against Ullala, acknowledging Abbakka's formidable resistance.

Historians such as Dr B S Shastri and Dr Suryanath Kamath draw parallels between Abbakka and Queen Elizabeth I of England, who similarly defied Spanish power. In 1618, Abbakka decisively defeated Portuguese forces, preventing them from establishing a colony. Her strategic brilliance and leadership instilled fear among the Portuguese, akin to Elizabeth's impact on the Spanish Armada.



Family Life

Younger Abbakka was married to Bangha Chief Veera Narasimha Lakshmappa Bangharasa IV of Bangha principality. Abbakka's marital alliance with Lakshmappa Bangharasa IV of the Bangha family initially seemed harmonious but later deteriorated over trade disagreements with the Portuguese. They had three children, namely, Chikka Raya, who had died at an early age; Cheluva Raya; and one daughter, Tirumalamba. The Queen divorced him, sending back to him all the jewels that he had given in marriage. She disliked Lakshmappa Bangharasa's pleasant approach to Portuguese. He was not willing to earn the wrath of the Portuguese with regard to his trade activities and offering of tribute. Abbakka ultimately left her husband's palace in Mangalore and returned to Ullala with her children. She assumed the throne of Ullala inherited from her mother, as per the *Aliyakattu* setup.

On one such occasion, as she was going in a boat upon a river, not well guarded, the Bangha king sent his people in another boat and took her into his custody. She, however, managed to escape the imprisonment through her tactful and oratory skills.

Perspective of an Italian Traveller

Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle's accounts provide a vivid portrayal of Abbakka, who, despite her humble appearance, commanded immense respect and authority. Engaged in irrigation projects and other public works, she exemplified a ruler dedicated to her people's welfare. She was known for her equitable rule and concern for her subjects' welfare. Abbakka fostered an inclusive governance model, transcending caste and religious distinctions. Her governance model, characterised by direct involvement in various administrative sectors, serves as a beacon for contemporary leaders. Abbakka's inclusive approach, even towards enemies, highlights her magnanimity and strategic foresight. The Persian ruler Shah Abbas' recommendation to Pietro to visit Queen Abbakka underscores her global reputation as a formidable and just ruler. No other source provides as detailed information about Abbakka as Pietro Della Valle's travelogue. Inspired by Abbas' words, Pietro travelled to Ullala to see Abbakka in 1623. Upon arriving at the capital, he found out that she was not in the capital but in Malali, another political center. Upon inquiring, he learned that she was engaged in building a bridge for an irrigation system and would not return until the evening. When Pietro finally saw her, she appeared humble, with no sandals or crown, yet she commanded immense respect and authority. Pietro was thoroughly impressed by her personality and gained his admiration and respect.

Abbakka's constant war against the Portuguese was marked by her commitment to her principality. Her resistance extended beyond the Portuguese, facing challenges from Keladi Venkatappa Nayaka later on. Despite territorial losses, she persistently sought to reclaim her lands, showcasing her unwavering commitment to independence. Abbakka's administrative acumen and egalitarian principles are lauded, particularly her efforts to ensure social harmony and justice. Abbakka's dedication to her people's welfare, agricultural development, irrigation, trade and justice was unwavering. Her life exemplified the roles of a mother, nurse and just queen.

In a letter written on 27 December 1599 (accessed from the Lisbon archive), the queen expresses her deep condolences to her overlord

when he lost the Prince of the State. She expresses her regret at the loss in hand while also diplomatically expressing her feats in the wars in the same letter. She writes, 'I do not speak of my feats and the wars, since the Captain of this fortress, Simão de Souza de Castro, will go there and give the larger half of the information and the developments of all these wars to Your Lordship'. This illustrates her compassionate side and diplomatic streaks.

In summation, we may say that both Abbakka's mother and daughter posed a strong threat to the Portuguese. They tried to subdue their policy of expansion, especially in the coastal belt. However, the younger Abbakka did not get support from neighbouring rulers or from her husband. In the midst of all this political turmoil, she had to protect her principality and safeguard the interests of her subjects. Thus, Rani Abbakka's legacy is a testament to her indomitable spirit and visionary leadership. Her resistance against foreign domination and commitment to her people's welfare establish her as a pivotal figure in Indian history, worthy of academic recognition and commemoration. Abbakka thus assumes a distinct place among all the women fighters of India across time. □

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Photo Courtesy : From the Rani Abbakka Art Gallery of Dr Tukaram Poojary, President, Rani Abbakka Tulu Adhyayana Kendra and Tulu Baduku Museum, Karnataka.

Picture of fierce fight: Artist: KN Ramachandra, Bangalore.

Portrait of Rani Abbakka: Artist: Vasudev Kamath, Mumbai.



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- The last date for registration is **January 17, 2025**.

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Glorious Guards of Freedom from Gujarat: A Tale Often Untold

Throughout history, many heroes have fought for India's freedom. Some are famous worldwide, while others are only known locally. Some are lesser known, with their importance recognised only within their communities. The sacrifices of all these individuals are a vital part of India's journey to independence. From figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, whose names echo across history books, to lesser-known but equally valiant individuals like Vasant Rao Hegishte, Rajab Ali Lakhani, and Hansa Mehta, Gujarat's contributions to India's independence are diverse and profound. Along the western coast of India, Gujarat has served as a pivotal gateway from the era of Harappa to modern times, enriched by countless historical figures, some lost to time and others yet to be fully recognised. This article delves into India's struggle for independence, uncovering the lesser-known heroes who played crucial roles.

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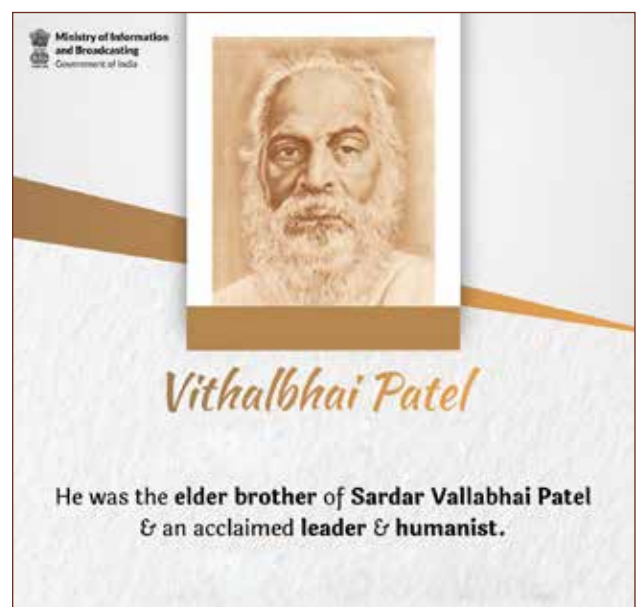
Echoes of Valour: Gujarat's Unsung Heroes of the 1857 Revolt

The Waghers of Okhamandal embody the resistance against British rule during the 1857 revolt. Dwarka, a bustling port and revered pilgrimage site, drew travellers and pilgrims nationwide. In the early 19th century, local communities, including the Waghers, challenged British ships. In 1816, Beyt Dwarka fell to the East India Company and remained under their control.

By the summer of 1857, echoes of rebellion had reached Dwarka, prompting Mulu Manek and Jodha Manek to lead the Waghers in a bid to overthrow British rule in Okha. By March 1858, they had reclaimed the Beyt Dwarka fort. Jodha Manek briefly assumed the title of king of Dwarka until July 1859, when the British recaptured the city. Despite their defeat, Jodha and Mulu waged a persistent guerrilla war.

Mulu Manek was captured due to betrayal in late 1859 but escaped in 1862, fighting until his death

in 1868. Jodha Manek fled to Gir and succumbed to illness in 1860. Both remain revered heroes in Saurashtra, commemorated by Jodha Manek Road in Dwarka and celebrated in local folklore. The revolt



also ignited uprisings in northern, central, and eastern Gujarat, where leaders like Garbaddas Mukhi of Anand, Rupa and Keval Nayak of Panchmahal, Soorajmal of Lunawada and Tilidarkhan of Panchmahal led the resistance against British oppression.

This list, though incomplete, encapsulates the spirit of freedom and resistance against injustice that defined this pivotal period in Indian history.

The Story of Economic Independence: Ranchhodlal Chhotatalal

The struggle for independence is often seen as a direct confrontation with rulers, yet economic empowerment proves equally vital in battling oppression. India's wealth drew the East India Company, initially trading 'Made in India' goods globally before transforming India into a raw material supplier during England's Industrial Revolution. This shift devastated traditional crafts and rural economies, famously documented by Dada Bhai Naoroji's writings on India's wealth drain to England. Gujarat, historically entrepreneurial, saw Ranchhodlal Chhotatalal emerge as a catalyst for both political and economic independence.

Born in 1823, Ranchhodlal showed early promise. In 1850, at the age of 27, he made early efforts to establish a mill in Ahmedabad. By 1842, at 19, he began as a private clerk to A W James, assistant collector of customs in Ahmedabad, earning Rs 10 monthly. Rapid promotions followed, reaching Principal Native Revenue Officer by 1845 with a salary of Rs 75. By 1852, he had attained the post of Assistant Superintendent of Pavagarh, akin to a political agent's assistant—a pinnacle for Indians then. His aspirations within the Raj were dashed in 1852 amid false corruption accusations, leading him to reshape Ahmedabad's industrial landscape.

Inspired, Ranchhodlal founded his spinning mill in Ahmedabad, though initial responses were tepid. Undeterred, he established the 'Ahmedabad Spinning and Weaving Company Ltd.' in 1859, overcoming setbacks like a shipwrecked machinery shipment and the loss of hired engineers. The city's textile mills thrived, earning Ahmedabad the moniker 'Manchester of the East,' with 62 mills by 1916. Many mill owners and families later played a pivotal role in India's independence movement.

Beyond industry, Ranchhodlal influenced civic life, serving as an Ahmedabad Municipality

member and chairperson. Despite resistance, he revolutionised the city with sewage systems and tap water, transforming its hygiene and earning international acclaim. In 1891, renowned nurse and social reformer, Florence Nightingale invited him to London for the International Congress on Hygiene and Demography, crediting Ranchhodlal for his achievements.

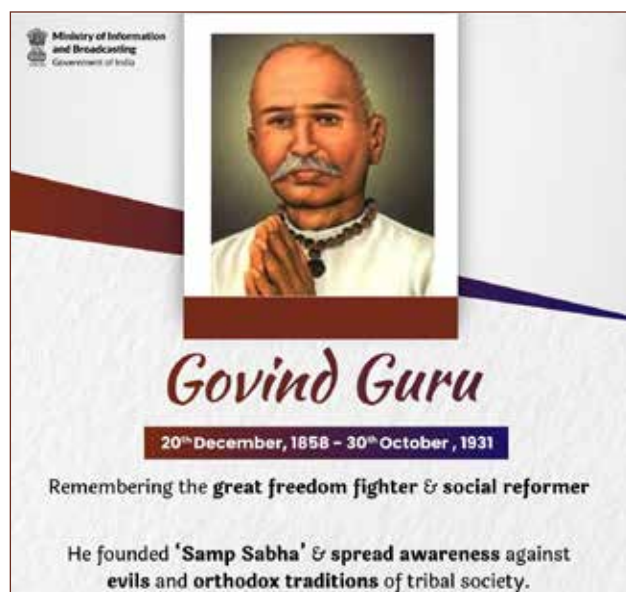
Ranchhodlal opposed countervailing duties on Indian cotton in 1896 and the restrictive rules of the 1884-85 Factory Act. Active in the Indian National Congress, he chaired the welcome committee for its sixth annual session in Ahmedabad, advocating for girls' education and poverty alleviation.

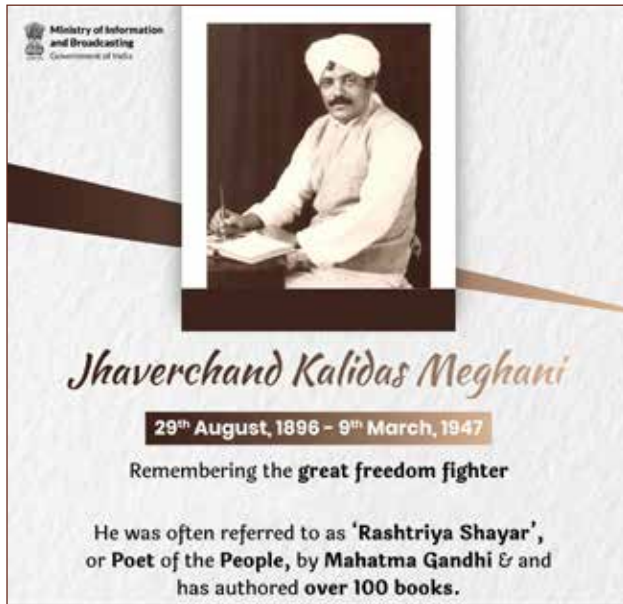
Ahmedabad, propelled by Ranchhodlal's vision, later became the cradle of the Gandhian era.

Two Massacres and Two Leaders: The Untold story of Mangadh and Dradhvav

In the early 20th century, British authorities brutally suppressed uprisings across India. Govind Guru worked tirelessly to unite tribals in southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat against the oppression of local rulers and the administration.

On 17 November 1913, Bhils gathered on Mangadh Hills near the Gujarat-Rajasthan border under Govind Guru's leadership, challenging the might of the British army. Armed with guns, the British forces mercilessly killed approximately 1500 tribals. Govind Guru was later captured and initially sentenced to death, which was later commuted to life imprisonment.





Despite such brutal incidents, the spirit of revolt persisted among the Bhils. Motilal Tejawat, born in Udaipur in 1886, witnessed the exploitation of tribals during his spice trading business and decided to advocate for their rights. He initiated social reforms and raised political awareness among the Bhils, earning widespread popularity. Under his leadership, Bhils refused to pay unjust taxes and perform forced labour for local rulers, drawing inspiration from Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement.

On 7 March 1922, in Pal-Chitariya and Dadhvaav villages of Sabarkantha district, then part of Idar state, villagers gathered to protest feudal taxes. The surrounding princely states feared losing control and deployed armed forces against the tribals. The Mewar Bhil Corps (MBC), a paramilitary force raised by the British, engaged with the villagers, resulting in a clash that claimed the lives of more than 1200-1500 tribals. While official records reported only 22 deaths, historians estimate a significantly higher toll. This tragic massacre prompted Motilal Tejawat to pause his activities briefly, but he later resumed his fight until India gained independence. He is revered among the Bhils as the 'Maseeha of Bhils'.

A man who could read the pulse of people: Jhaverchand Meghani

Born in 1896 in Chotila, Gujarat, Jhaverchand Meghani earned the title of 'Rashtriya Shayar' (National Poet) from Mahatma Gandhi. Hailing from a family of traders, Meghani mastered the

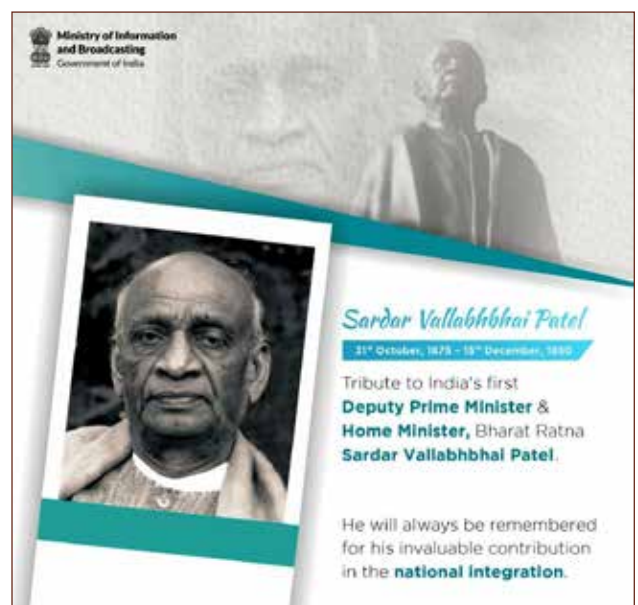
art of words and immersed himself in the villages, chronicling the folk tales of the people. He became the editor of a Gujarati newspaper at a young age and actively participated in Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience Movement, notably in Dholera.

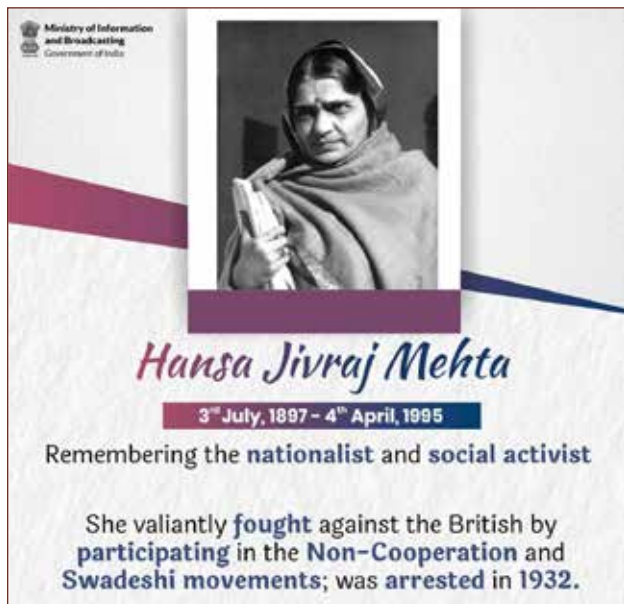
His poetry collection, 'Sindhudo,' resonated with themes of courage and bravery. Meghani's influence and powerful writings posed a threat to the British, leading to his unjust arrest. During Gandhiji's conflicted journey to the Second Round Table Conference in London, Meghani penned 'Chello Katoro' (Last Sip of Poison), a poem that deeply resonated with Gandhiji. Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's personal aide, noted that Gandhiji affirmed the poem's accuracy, suggesting Meghani's insight into Gandhiji's thoughts.

Meghani's words continue to inspire generations in Gujarat. His literary contributions during India's struggle for freedom remain invaluable, capturing not only the struggles and aspirations of his people but also preserving Gujarat's rich folk heritage for posterity.

Vasant and Rajab: The Story of Communal Harmony in Times of Hatred

In the tumultuous year of 1946, India's communal harmony was under siege due to divisive British politics. On 1 July 1946 in Ahmedabad, during a Rathayatra, riots erupted, plunging the city into chaos. Amidst this turmoil, two young friends, Vasant Rao Hegishte and Rajab Ali Lakhani, both volunteers with the Seva Dal, bravely intervened to protect lives.





Disturbed by the escalating violence, Vasant and Rajab fearlessly confronted the rioters, pleading with them to cease their actions. Their actions momentarily quelled the unrest.

Later that day, exhausted but resolute, they returned to the Congress Office at *Khand-ni-Sheri*. However, they received distressing news that families in Jamalpur were under threat from a violent mob. Without hesitation, Vasant and Rajab rushed back to intervene, attempting to reason with the mob to spare the vulnerable families. Tragically, their appeals fell on deaf ears. Ignoring warnings, they lay down on the road to shield the families. In a brutal act of violence, the mob ruthlessly murdered them, martyring two young men who sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of communal harmony and peace.

Ahmedabad still commemorates their sacrifice, honouring their memory as a symbol of courage and unity in the face of hatred and violence.

A Legacy of Courage: Hansa Mehta's Journey from Surat to the UN

Hansa Mehta, born in 1897 in Surat, defied the societal norms of her time by earning a degree in philosophy, a rarity for women in early 20th century India. Descended from Gujarat's pioneering novelist, Nandshankar Mehta, she inherited liberal values from her family. During her time in England, she had a transformative encounter with Sarojini Naidu, which shaped her worldview significantly. In the 1920s, she met Mahatma Gandhi while he was

imprisoned in India, and in 1930, she responded to his call for women to join the freedom movement.

At the historic 1947 Conference of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Hansa Mehta, one of only two women delegates, boldly advocated for inclusive language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She argued against the phrase "All men are born free and equal," proposing to replace "men" with "humans," highlighting her commitment to gender-neutral rights language.

As one of the 15 women in the Constituent Assembly of India, she played a pivotal role, symbolically presenting the National Flag on 15 August 1947, on behalf of Indian women. Throughout her tenure in the Constituent Assembly, she championed debates on crucial issues like the Uniform Civil Code and gender equality, solidifying her legacy as a torchbearer for human rights and women's empowerment on a global stage.

Hansa Mehta's enduring contributions stand as a testament to her unwavering commitment to justice and equality, marking a significant chapter in history.

In recounting the tales of Gujarat's unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle, we uncover narratives of extraordinary courage and unwavering commitment. From figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, whose names echo across history books, to lesser-known but equally valiant individuals like Vasant Rao Hegishte, Rajab Ali Lakhani, and Hansa Mehta, Gujarat's contributions to India's independence are diverse and profound.

These stories highlight not only the sacrifices made and challenges overcome but also the diversity of roles played—whether through nonviolent resistance, advocacy for gender equality, or protecting communal harmony in times of strife. Each hero, in their own way, embodies the spirit of resilience and determination that defined the era.

As we reflect on their legacies, it becomes evident that their efforts transcended regional boundaries, resonating with universal ideals of justice, equality, and freedom. Gujarat's unsung heroes continue to inspire us today, reminding us of the power of individual actions in shaping the course of history and the ongoing pursuit of a just society for all. □

(Views are personal)



On 16 June 1801, the fort city of Tiruchirappalli in South India and its twin city and island, 4 km away, Srirangam, woke up with a handwritten wall poster challenging the Europeans in general and East India Company, in particular, to leave Jambudweep (Indian Peninsula), hand over powers to the local rulers, or face the consequences.

There were two handwritten posters. One was pasted on the wall of the Tiruchirappalli Fort, and the other was pasted on the wall of the famous Vaishnavite temple on Srirangam Island. Its author was Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar, the de facto ruler of Sivaganga state. The de jure ruler was Vengai Periya Udaiyana Thevar, the son-in-law of Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar's elder brother, Periya Marudhu Pandiyar. Both the Marudhu brothers were the camp followers of Sivaganga Queen Velu Nachiyar, who was deposed by the mercenary East India Company at the instigation of the Arcot Nawab on 25 June 1772. After 8 years of exile in the mountains of Virupakshi (100 km away from Sivaganga), with the help of Virupakshi ruler Gopala Naicker and Hyder Ali's son-in-law and Governor of Dindigul, Queen Nachiyar captured Sivaganga from Arcot Nawab and his agent, the East India Company, and resumed her rule at Sivaganga.

During her rule, the two Marudhu Pandiyars became the Queen's close associates and assumed the positions of Minister and Army General. On 26 December 1796, Queen Velu Nachiyar died, leaving her son-in-law, Vengai Periya Udaiyana Thevar, as the Ruler of Sivaganga. The Marudhu Brothers continued to guide the new king. The East India Company, till this time, acted as an agent for Arcot Nawab Mohammed Ali Khan Walajah, and his treaties, made in the years 1763, 1781, 1785, 1787

and 1792 with the East India Company, made Arcot Nawab powerless. When the last treaty was signed between the Walajah and East India Company in the year 1792, East India Company totally reversed the earlier treaties and conferred upon it the status of a ruler in the place of Arcot Nawab. Arcot Nawab was made a mere pensioner by the East India Company, and he was sidelined.

When the Nawab Walajah died on 16 October 1795, he died as a very sad man. Two years before his death, the East India Company found out that he was in letter correspondence with the enemy of the East India Company, Tipu Sultan. At the time of the death of Walajah, it was rumoured that he was poisoned to death by the East India Company.

The next Arcot Nawab, Umdutt-ul-Umrah, was deported from his headquarters and made to stay at Tiruchirappalli during the years 1795-1801. When the proclamation by the Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar was made on 16 June 1801, the powerless Nawab was ailing in Tiruchirappalli and he died two months later on 15 August 1801. At the time of his death, the Marudhu brothers were engaging the East India Company in the Kalaiyar Kovil war theatre.

A proclamation is one that is made by a ruler at a critical time. The ruler conveys to his subjects the need for war and the benefits of being successful. In Indian history, never before has a proclamation been made by a ruler. In world history, only on two occasions have proclamations been made. One was a proclamation by the American states against their motherland, i.e., England, 25 years before the Jambudweep Proclamation. Another proclamation was made by the French people against their ruler Louis XVI, 11 years before Chinna Marudhu Pandian's declaration.



Four days before Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar's proclamation, the Madras Governor made a proclamation against Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar. It was more of a threat to Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar and his fellow patriots, Panchalamkurichi Oomaidurai, his brother Sevathaiya, Virupakshi Gopal Naicker, Ramnad Amaldar, Jagannatha Iyer and Coimbatore Sheikh Hussain. Chinna Marudhu's brother Periya Marudhu was offered a decent livelihood at Madurai by the governor if he broke away from his brother Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar. The patriots rejected all the baits and threats made by Governor Edward Clive, the son of the legendary Robert Clive. A war broke out between the Chinna Marudhu's associates on one side and the British East India Company, rulers of Travancore, Pudukottai and Ettayapuram on the other side. The patriots, covering a distance of around 1,400 km starting from Pune in Western India to the southernmost tip of India, Nanguneri, fought vehemently against the combined forces of the East India Company for more than 4 months in the jungles of Kalaiyar Kovil.

During the war, the General commanding the East India Company's combined forces, Colonel Agnew, issued another proclamation threatening the patriots and implanting Gauri Vallaba Thevar, a puppet, as the new Sivaganga ruler. For the first time, in Indian warfare, Malaysian soldiers who were skilled in jungle warfare were used against Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar. The patriots lost the war and were arrested and hanged in their areas of influence.

Governor Edward Clive again issued a proclamation boasting of the superior war power of the East India Company and advising the public to comply with the orders of the East India Company officers. Never before in Indian history has an Indian ruler issued a proclamation and been reciprocated by three counter-proclamations by the East India Company.

To understand the importance of the proclamation made by Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar, a cursory look at the same is essential. Here are the excerpts:

"Whoever reads this, read with full attention. To all the *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas, Sudras*, and people who are divided by caste and Mussalman who are on the Peninsula of Jambu Dweepa, this proclamation is made.

His Highness the Arcot Nawab Mohammad Ali, having foolishly given the Europeans a place to operate, now lives like a widow. The Europeans, violating their promises, have deceitfully made our kingdom their own and considered the inhabitants as dogs. They exercise authority over us. We have no unity and friendship amongst us, not aware of the cunningness of these Europeans. We are not only against each other but also absolutely surrendered our kingdoms to the Europeans. The inhabitants have become poor, and the hard rice we used has deteriorated to watery rice. Although we suffer, we still do not understand our pitiable condition.





Periya Marudhu Pandiyar and Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar

Every man must certainly die one day. But his fame will survive him as long as the sun and moon are in existence. Therefore, it is devised and determined that, in the future, each one shall enjoy his hereditary rights. His Highness the Nawab Arcot Subha, Vijaya Ramanath Tirumala Nayak of Madura, and the Tanjore Marata kings should be restored to their rightful sovereignty. The Europeans must confine themselves to dependent service only. As the authority of the Europeans will be destroyed soon, we shall have constant happiness without tears.

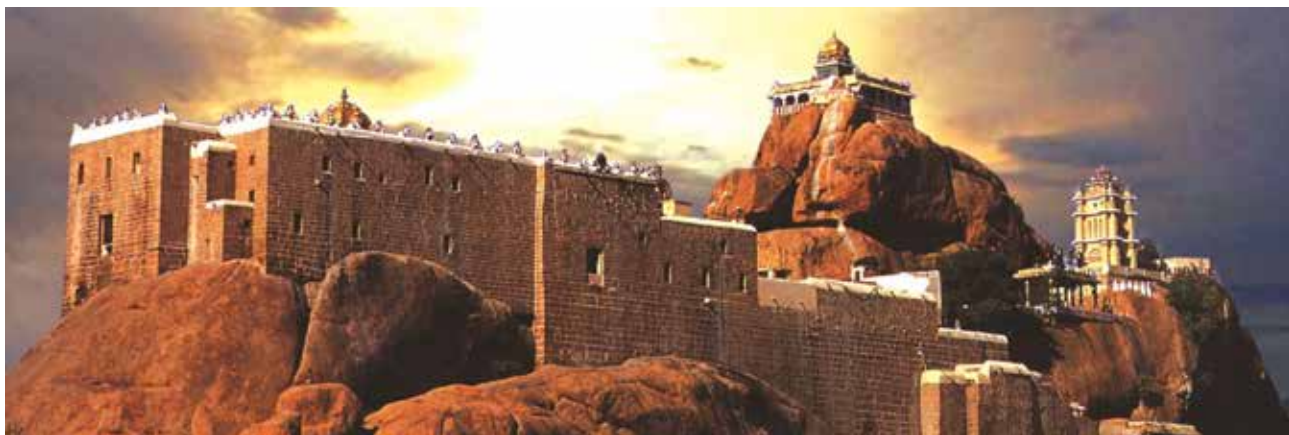
It is therefore recommended that every man in his village and palayam take arms and unite together. Then all the poor and the needy will get subsistence. Whoever takes this off from the wall where it is pasted, let him be held as guilty of the five greatest sins. Let everyone read and take a copy of this proclamation."

-Issued by Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar

In the 18th century, India was not known as a single nation. At that time, India consisted of Burma, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and parts

of Afghanistan. Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar, in his proclamation made a clarion call to all persons living in Jambudweep (Indian peninsula). There was a strong Tamil tradition in those days that Hasthinapuram, near Meerut, was the headquarters of the Hindus. Hasthinapuram witnessed destruction and later became the headquarters of Jainism. Many Jain mutts were established in Hasthinapuram. Hence, the Hindus shifted their veneration from Hasthinapuram to Jambudweep village, which is just 4 km from Hasthinapuram. Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar might not have travelled to Jambudweep, but he had geographical and religious knowledge about this place.

Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar's war against the British involved the voluntary participation of ryots, commoners, village heads, amaldars and rulers of small principalities. The war was conducted under the single command of Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar. People from Pune to Nanguneri in the southernmost tip of India, covering around 1400 km, participated in the 1801 war. After the defeat of Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar, 543 patriots were hanged in the Thiruppathur Fort, and 73 people



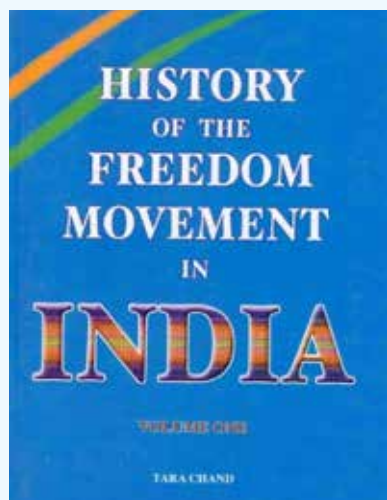
were deported to Penang Island in Malaysia. In India, this marked the first deportation of political prisoners to a foreign country.

Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar was also aware that the then-acting rulers of India, i.e., British, Dutch, Portuguese and French, could be grouped into one category as Europeans. At the time of the 1801 war, contrary to the normal practice of Indian rulers, Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar refused

to take the help of the Portuguese, Dutch, and French against the British East India Company. Because he considered every European an evil. In this way, Chinna Marudhu Pandiyar was far ahead of his time. Whatever he narrated in the proclamation, was not successful then. 56 years later, it was realised through the Sepoy Mutiny. Interestingly, the start of the mutiny was in Meerut, Jambudweep. □

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Untold Stories of the Freedom Struggle from Northeast India

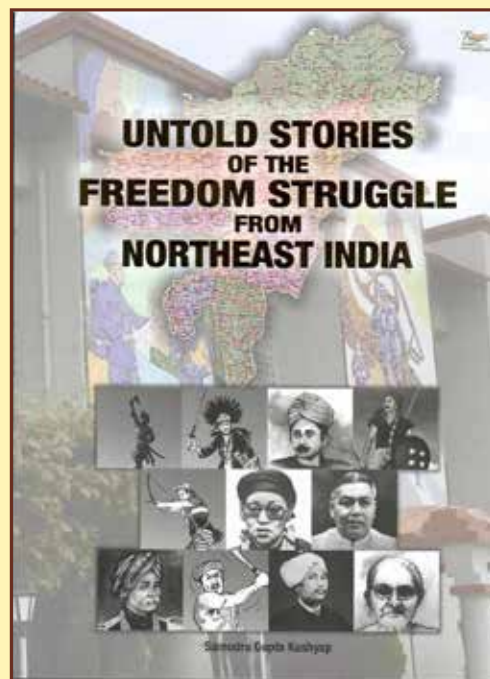
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Following are the excerpts from the book Untold Stories of the Freedom Struggle from North-East India...

Gomdhar Konwar: Assam's first martyr

Two years after the British annexed Assam, Gomdhar Konwar, a member of the royal Ahom clan, organised the first resistance. He initially wrote a petition to the British political agent in Jorhat to hand over the country to him and make him a tributary king. Some nobles, however, soon persuaded him to take up arms to oust the British.

In early October 1828, Gomdhar called a meeting of some important people and asked the people not to pay taxes to the British. Sometime in November, he was formally declared the king at Bassa, near Jorhat. An armed force began marching to Rangpur (present-day Sivasagar), then the British headquarters of the upper or eastern Assam region

(Guwahati was the headquarters of lower or western Assam). Unfortunately, they were intercepted at Deberapar, about 18 kilometres south of Jorhat. Gomdhar, who had fled to the Naga Hills, was later captured in December 1828.

Gomdhar Konwar, along with three of his accomplices—Dhanjoy, Daha Phukan, and Khamti Gohain—were tried by a panchayat in Jorhat on 10 December 1828. All of them were initially awarded a death sentence, which was soon reduced to 'imprisonment and banishment from Assam



Gomdhar Konwar

without labour for seven years.' Both Gomdhar and Dhanjoy, however, managed to escape from custody. But while Gomdhar was soon re-arrested, Dhanjoy remained untraced. Gomdhar was sent off to the Rangpur Jail in Bengal (now in Bangladesh), and though no information was available about him afterwards, it was presumed that he died while in prison. Accordingly, Gomdhar Konwar is considered to be the first to have attained martyrdom in the anti-colonial struggle.

Moongri: First woman martyr

The first woman to have lost her life while being part of the freedom movement is Moongri Orang, aka Malati, more remembered as Malati mem, as she apparently lived with a British tea planter at Lalmati tea estate in present-day Sonitpur district for some time. Habituated to heavy drinking, Moongri was somehow attracted by the anti-liquor campaign when Omeo Kumar Das and others were picketing before liquor shops in that area in March-April 1921. Realising her mistake, she quit drinking and jumped into the campaign, particularly appealing to tea plantation workers to give up the addiction.

It was the British planters who inculcated the liquor-drinking habit among the labourers. The entry of Congress volunteers into tea estates with the help of Moongri, however, was detested by the British planters, and she was murdered in cold blood by unidentified assailants within a few days of her joining the campaign. In the next three decades, women occupied a significant position in the national movement, and several of them also laid down their lives for the cause.



Dhekiajuli Massacre: India's youngest martyr

On 20 September 1942, several hundred people from villages in adjoining areas, led by Shanti Sena volunteers, converged outside Dhekiajuli police station (28 kilometres west of Tezpur) at around

noon. They were led by three specially designated Mrityu Bahini members: Manbar Nath, Golok Chandra Neog, and Chandrakanta Nath. The police officer in charge refused to let the volunteers enter the police station. As the civil police began beating them, the people responded with Vande Mataram and barged into the compound. Then the armed policemen opened fire. There was total chaos, but the dedicated Mrityu Bahini members managed to carry the flag in, and Manbar Nath even climbed to the roof of the police station. Even as he was about to fix the flag, two bullets pierced through his body in quick succession. As Manbar Nath rolled down the roof, Chandrakanta Nath snatched the flag and held it high to enable Golok Chandra Neog to complete the task. A policeman fired a shot straight towards Neog, but it instead hit his mother, Kumoli Neog, who, on seeing her son being targeted, jumped in a fraction of a second to protect him. By then, Chandrakanta Nath had managed to fix the flag atop the police station.

The policemen, meanwhile, began chasing the crowd out of the police station compound, beating them and firing indiscriminately. Several men and women were hit by bullets. Over the next two days, at least 13 people were found killed in the incident on September 20. Several others sustained grievous injuries and died in the next few months.

The Dhekiajuli incident stands out as the worst incident in terms of the brutality of colonial forces during the 'Quit India' phase of the national movement. 12-year-old Tileswari Barua became the youngest martyr of the national movement (sharing the honour with Baji Rout of Dhenkanal, Odisha). What was worse, as she lay dying on the road after being first hit by a bullet and then assaulted by hired miscreants, a police vehicle came and picked her up, and Tileswari or her body was never seen again. A beggar and a sanyasi were also killed in the Dhekiajuli incident; there is no other such example of patriotism elsewhere in the subcontinent during the freedom movement.

Bom Singpho of Arunachal Pradesh: The First Martyr from the Hills of NE

While three successive Burmese invasions in 1817, 1819, and 1821 had led to anarchy and chaos in Assam, chiefs of some Singpho groups who had sided with the Burmese had come down to the Brahmaputra plains and occupied some

adjoining territories. Having pushed them out too, the British, in their operation to throw the Burmese out beyond the Patkai mountain (in present-day eastern Arunachal Pradesh), entered the territories of the Khamti and Singpho people.

The Burmese had, during their retreat, taken away as captives several thousand Assamese people. Many of the captives were apparently left behind in the custody of different Khamti and Singpho chiefs. The British increased their troops in the frontier area every passing week and launched a series of raids in the Khamti and Singpho villages to free those captives. This led to clashes between the tribal communities and British troops. But, in May 1826, as many as 16 Singpho Chiefs were forced to accept the supremacy of the British and agree to assist the East India Company's forces to resist fresh Burmese incursions. Soon, most Khamti chiefs were also forced to fall in line and sign an agreement.

Though compelled by circumstances to accept British suzerainty, the Singphos kept looking for opportunities to strike back and expel the foreigners from their territory. In 1828, soon after the British had occupied Assam, a prominent Singpho chief called Bom Singpho took part in the second Assamese attempt led by Peoli Phukan and Jiuram Duliya Barua to oust the British. Bom Singpho, in fact, was alongside prominent Assamese noblemen who had organised an army of about 400 men and attacked the British station at Rangpur (Sivasagar). They set on fire the British magazine at Rangpur on the night of 25 March 1830.

The leaders of this attack—six of them, including Bom Singpho—were soon apprehended, tried at Rangpur, held 'guilty of treason' and a sentence of death by hanging pronounced against them. Later, the death sentences of four people, including Bom Singpho were commuted to banishment from Assam for 14 years and transferred to the Dhaka Jail (now in Bangladesh) for rigorous imprisonment. Bom Singpho died of illness while in prison, thus becoming the first from the hills of the North-Eastern Region to attain martyrdom.

Thangal General of Manipur: Martyrdom at 80

One of the bravest sons of Manipur, Thangal General, rose through the ranks during the reign (1827-1834) of Maharaja Gambhir Singh. He, however, remained out of the limelight for over a decade after the death of Gambhir Singh in 1834,



Thangal General



Bir Tikendrajit

but became the most powerful member in the durbar of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh (1850-1886). Loyal to the Maharaja and his sons, Thangal held important posts and rose to become a general.

Things, however, changed after Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh's death in 1886. While he fell out of favour of the new king Surchandra, he grew close to prince Tikendrajit and was an important participant in the palace revolt of 1890. Thangal General also remained a highly trusted officer of Maharaja Kulachandra Singh, who assumed office after Surchandra Singh had fled in the wake of the palace revolt. He followed Senapati Tikendrajit like a shadow throughout the difficult time when the British launched a mission to arrest the former. It is said that the execution of the five British officers on 24 March 1891, was carried out under his orders at the behest of Tikendrajit.

After the Manipuris were defeated and their country occupied, Thangal General fell into the hands of the British on 7 May 1891. Thangal General was hanged to death in full view of thousands of weeping Manipuris in the evening of 13 August 1891, alongside Tikendrajit in front of the western gate of the palace. It is on record that while Tikendrajit walked up to the gallows, Thangal General had to be physically lifted for the noose to be tied around his neck. Thangal General was about 80 years of age when he attained martyrdom.

Ka Phan Nonglait of Meghalaya: A Woman of Courage

Literally meaning 'abode of the clouds' in Sanskrit, Meghalaya was part of Assam as two districts during the colonial and post-Independence eras. Before the advent of the British, the present state of Meghalaya comprised

three distinct socio-political regions belonging to the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo communities.

The Khasi society being primarily matrilineal, women had played their role in the struggle against the British. While all the able-bodied men of Khadsawphra came forward to join the war of resistance, a number of gallant women also joined the militia of U Tirot Sing, Syiem (the traditional Khasi Chief) of Khadsawphra. One such brave woman was Ka Phan Nonglait, whose story of courage and patriotism stands out and is told as a folktale by successive generations of Khasi people.

In one of the operations, the British troops were moving from Mairang towards Nongkhlaw in April 1833. While the road to Nongkhlaw was blocked at several places, several skirmishes between the two sides took place, first at Mairang and then at Nongrmai. A number of young women took part in these skirmishes alongside the men. It was near Mairang that the young and beautiful Ka Phan Nonglait, it is said, drew the attention of a detachment of British troops near a waterfall and offered them a local brew. As the soldiers got drunk, she took the opportunity to remove the weapons, which she hid in a rockhole beside the waterfall. Later, she sent signals to Tirot Sing's men, who rushed to kill the soldiers and seize the weapons.

Ropuiliani: A valiant woman from Mizoram

The hills of present-day Mizoram once upon a time were comprised of a number of village clusters ruled by their respective chiefs. Such were the developments of history that the Mizo Hills—then called Lushai Hills—were at one point in time surrounded by British territories on all sides. Bengal (including Sylhet in present-day Bangladesh) on the west came under British rule in 1765, Burma to the east in 1824, Assam (including Cachar) annexed and Manipur came under British control in 1826, and Chittagong (in present-day Bangladesh) in 1860.

Though the British had established supremacy over the Lushai Hills after the 'Chin-Lushai

Expedition' of 1889-1890, there were still a sizable number of chiefs who continued to oppose and resist the colonial rulers. There were also a few courageous women who had taken upon themselves the responsibility of defending their land from the British, who were out to occupy as much hill territory as possible in the Lushai Hills, or present-day Mizoram.

Prominent among them was Ropuiliani, an exceptionally courageous woman who became Chief of Denlung Village in 1889. Her father was also a powerful chief of a territory in present-day northern Mizoram, while she was married to Vandula, an equally influential chief of the southern Lushai Hills. Both Vandula and Ropuiliani's father had bitterly opposed the British invasion from the very beginning. Ropuiliani, who was born in 1828 and took over as Chief, refused to let the British construct roads through her territory. She also vehemently opposed the British demand for tributary or free labour and was particularly enraged when the British established a military stockade at her son Lalthuama's village.

Gradually, as more chiefs began opposing labour recruitment, imposition, and forcible collection of taxes, the needle of suspicion was pointed at Ropuiliani and her son Lalthuama. In March 1892, two of her men murdered a British interpreter and agent called Satinkharaa. In April 1897, when the British government under Captain J Shakespeare fortified Lungleh and began making various demands from the chiefs, it was Ropuiliani who stood up boldly against the foreigners.

As the number of her followers increased, the British government sent out an 'expedition' and raided the village. Ropuiliani and her son, Lalthuama, were arrested on 9 August 1893. Lodged in Lunglei Jail, Ropuiliani, however, refused to compromise, and was thus, deported along with her son to Rangamati (headquarters of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, now in Bangladesh) on 8 April 1894. Later shifted to Chittagong Jail, Ropuiliani died there.

Her son, Lalthuama, was released on 1 April 1896. But, though his original village was given to other people, he was permitted to retain his chieftainship at a village in the Hlumte hills.



Gradually, Lalthuama took to submission, and Ropuiliani's clan gave up resisting the British.

Nagaland: The Fall of Khonoma

Till the advent of the British, the various communities of present-day Nagaland—17 major tribes and their sub-tribes—lived in their respective territories. While some, like the Angamis, largely pursued democracy to varying degrees, others, like the Aos, had a kind of Republican system with councils. Some others were governed by clan or village chiefs, and yet others followed a combination of tribal and pseudo-feudal systems.

While the British annexed Assam and took control of Manipur in 1826, it was only in 1832 that they first came into direct contact with the Nagas. In February 1851, the Nagas were engaged in the worst-ever battle with the British in Kekrima, a powerful village east of Kohima. Comprising of about 1,000 houses, Kekrima was attacked on 11 February 1851, with the brave Nagas putting in their best against the colonial troops. But their spears and daos were no match for the modern firearms of the British, and even as the battle lasted the entire day, more than 100 brave Nagas laid down their lives as Kekrima fell. With this, the British carried out altogether ten 'expeditions' in the Naga Hills.

On 21 February 1851, Governor General Lord Dalhousie announced a policy of non-interference

in the Naga Hills and laid emphasis on protecting the frontiers of its own territory in Assam. As the British troops were withdrawn from Dimapur in March 1851, Nagas were prohibited from visiting markets in the Assam plains without a permit.

In 1877, many people were killed when Angamis from Mezoma raided Gumaigaju village in North Cachar. This prompted the British to launch a fresh 'expedition' to Mezoma in December 1877. Unable to control the hills from Samaguting, which is located on the northern fringe, the headquarters were shifted to Kohima in November 1878, after the village was occupied without much resistance. Sixteen other villages, however, were forced to submit.

Khonoma and many other villages, however, were in no mood to surrender to British authority so easily. On gathering information about this, G H Damant, the political officer in charge of the Naga Hills, set out on a visit to Khonoma on 13 October 1879, accompanied by 86 sepoy and policemen. He left half his men at the foot of the hill, and on climbing the steep pathway to the village, he came under sudden attack. Damant was shot dead within a few seconds, and even as his escort tried to flee in the wake of a volley of shots, 35 men of the troops were killed and 19 wounded.

Excited with the victory, the Khonoma warriors immediately rushed to Kohima, just 20 km away, and besieged the British station there, holding hostile demonstrations outside. The siege went on for 12 days, causing panic and a shortage of food inside. While a small reinforcement of about 60 sepoy and policemen from Wokha appeared inadequate, the unexpected arrival of Colonel Johnstone on 27 October with a large army of about 2,000 men from Manipur caused the unarmed Naga demonstrators to disperse. The heavily armed combination of British troops proved too strong, and the armed Naga warriors



Khonoma Fort, Nagaland

were dispelled without any major casualties.

Having lost three British officers to the Nagas in a span of five years, the colonial government in India decided that the Nagas should be 'taught a lesson' once and for all. The troops, headed by Brigadier General JL Nation, started moving on 14 November. Having made a ground assessment from all sides, the troops launched their attack on Khonoma on 22 November.

While heavy firing, including rocket assaults, was made on the strongest Naga fortress in the early morning, the British troops had a tough time despite superior firepower. By afternoon, they had broken the first line of defence, causing heavy casualties on the Naga side. The Khonoma defenders used a combination of rifles and traditional Naga weapons, and by early evening, two British officers, Major Cock and Lieutenant Forbes, as well as Subedar Nubir Sahi, had lost their lives along with at least 17 soldiers. By late night, Khonoma was set on fire, forcing the people to abandon the village under the cover of darkness and take shelter on the crest of the Barail range.

In January 1880 itself, the British government directed the army to finally crush the Nagas, who were holed up on the cliffs of Khonoma. The strategy adopted was to place forces in all Angami villages around Khonoma, besiege the fort, and cut off supply routes. This compelled the Khonoma warriors to finally surrender without any bloodshed. They were, however, subjected to heavy penalties. Moreover, a section of the people was forcibly shifted to other villages, and the remaining men were made to work as forced labour in the construction of roads.

Sachindra Lal Singh: Freedom Fighter from Tripura

There was no direct participation of the people of the kingdom of Tripura in the Indian freedom movement. But then, as has already been mentioned, several local organisations affiliated with or inspired by groups and organisations in Bengal and other parts of India that had spread the message of freedom and the concept of one India. One man who deserves special mention in the context of the anti-colonial movement in Tripura is Sachindra Lal Singh. His father, Dinadayal Singh, who belonged to Banaras, had settled in Tripura after being entrusted

by the king to establish the military set-up of the kingdom. Born in Agartala in July 1907, Sachindra Lal Singh, even as a high school student, had become a member of the Bhatri Sangha, a socio-political organisation of Agartala that had connections with the Jugantar Party of Bengal.

Sachindra attended Victoria College, Comilla (now in Bangladesh), and was highly influenced by the Indian freedom movement. An uncompromising fighter, Sachindra Lal Singh was a member of the crack team of Surya Sen, the great revolutionary of Bengal, who had organised the famous Chittagong Armoury raid on 18 April 1930. Arrested after the incident, Sachindra Lal Singh was initially in Comilla Jail, then shifted to the Hijli detention camp, and finally interned in Paba village in Rajshahi (in present-day Bangladesh).

After being released, he joined the Congress. The Tripura State Congress was formed in 1940 after the Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal merged with it. It was the Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal that launched a movement demanding a 'completely responsible' government in the princely state. This movement, which clearly appeared to be in line with the national movement across the subcontinent, had already alarmed the King. Sachindra Lal Singh was also part of the Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad, which was affiliated with the All India States Peoples' Conference (AISPC), a conglomeration of political movements in the princely states of the pre-independence era.

Sachindra Lal Singh, meanwhile, had seen in the Reang uprising of 1939-42 an undercurrent against British imperialism among the tribal communities of Tripura. Thus, he soon became part of the tribal movement and worked closely with Ratanmani Reang and other leaders of the Reang uprising. But he was soon arrested and put in detention, first in the Agartala Jail and then in Mymensingh Jail and Alipore Central Jail for several years. He had spent about 14 years of his life in jail during the colonial period. After India attained independence and the princely state of Tripura merged with the Indian Union, Sachindra Lal Singh went on to become the first Chief Minister of Tripura from July 1963 to November 1971. □

(Source: from the book 'Untold Stories of the Freedom Struggle from North-East India', Publications Division)

K Kelappan: A Dedicated Freedom Fighter and a Stalwart Social Reformer

K Kelappan (1889-1971), popularly known as ‘Kerala Gandhi’, was a prominent freedom fighter, Gandhian social activist, parliamentarian, administrator, socialist thinker, educationist, editor, and social reformer. He was a strong proponent of social reform and equality. His indefatigable efforts in the fight for freedom, reform, and equality left an indelible impact on Kerala’s history and the larger Indian narrative. He was the first Kerala Satyagrahi to join Mahatma Gandhi’s individual Satyagraha movement. He was imprisoned multiple times during the liberation struggle, including the Quit India Movement. Kelappan was the co-founder and first president of the Nair Sabha, subsequently known as the Nair Service Society (NSS), which was established in 1914 under the guidance of Mannath Padmanabhan, another well-known social reformer. Kelappan never aspired for power or position. His whole life was a saga of selfless service to the nation.

AJITH VENNIYOOR

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Kerala has a unique distinction in the struggle for freedom as it has been an independent geographical and political entity from the outset. Uprisings against British rule occurred in Kerala’s three zones, Malabar, Cochin (now known as Kochi), and Travancore, around the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries.

In Malabar, the insurrection was led by a native prince, Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, while in Cochin, it was orchestrated by Paliath Achan, the Prime Minister of Cochin State, and in Travancore by Veluthampy Dalava, the State Prime Minister. The British violently suppressed each of these revolts.

With the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, people in Kerala began to take an active part in the national movement. G P Pillai, Editor of ‘Madras Standard,’ was the first of the Kerala-based leader to lead the civil rights movement in Travancore State.

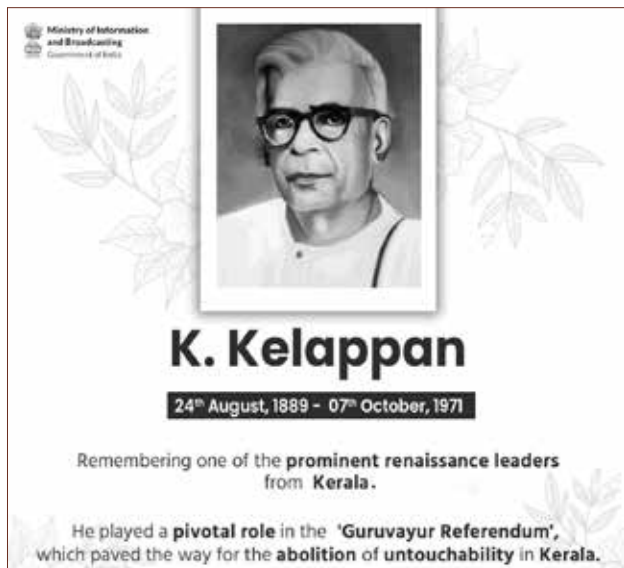
The Kerala independence movement arose

from a long-standing aspiration among people, particularly in the lower classes of the Hindu population. People aspired to combat inequality and social injustice. They desired emancipation from the oppressive caste system and customs established by royals and millennialists in the past.

During this turbulent time, Mahatma Gandhi paid five visits to Kerala, and each visit resulted in significant changes in society by uniting individuals and organisations from all three provinces—Travancore, Kochi and Malabar—people from various classes who were kept separate because of the then-prevailing caste system.

Many regional movements and struggles evolved, and a few educated and elite individuals emerged from these movements to become





leaders of the national movement later. G.P. Pillai, Sir C Sankaran Nair, G Ramachandran, Muhamed Abdurahiman, K P Kesava Menon, K Madhavan Nair, and K Kelappan deserve special mention. G P Pillai is the first Malayalee to rise to become a national leader. He was elected as the Secretary of the AICC in 1894. C Sankaran Nair of Ottapalam was the first Malayali to preside over the Amaravathi Session of the Congress in 1897. As Mahatma Gandhi's influence was growing, Non-Cooperation, the *Khilafat* movement and the Salt Satyagraha fueled the national spirit in Malabar.

K Kelappan: The Kerala Gandhi

K Kelappan (1889-1971), popularly known as 'Kerala Gandhi', was a prominent freedom fighter, Gandhian social activist, parliamentarian, administrator, socialist thinker, educationist, editor, and social reformer. He was a strong proponent of social reform and equality. His indefatigable efforts in the fight for freedom, social reform, and equality left an indelible impact on Kerala's history and the larger Indian narrative.

He was the first Kerala Satyagrahi to join Mahatma Gandhi's individual Satyagraha movement. He fought tirelessly for social change on the one hand and against the British on the other. He held numerous positions in the State Congress, including PCC President. He was imprisoned multiple times during the liberation struggle, including the Quit India Movement.

Kelappan was the co-founder and first president of the Nair Sabha, subsequently known as the Nair

Service Society (NSS), which was established in 1914 under the guidance of Mannath Padmanabhan, another well-known social reformer.

Evolution of a Revolutionary

Koyapalli Kelappan Nair (K Kelappan) was born on 24 August 1889 in Muchukunnu, a tiny village in Kerala's Kozhikode district. He studied in Kozhikkode (Calicut) and Chennai (Madras) before graduating from the University of Madras. He developed a strong interest in social work and higher human values during his undergraduate years. He began his career as a teacher at St. Berchman's High School in Changanassery.

In 1920, he became the principal of a society-run school. After that, he enrolled in law school in Bombay, but when Mahatma Gandhi issued his appeal for a boycott of the British, he discontinued his studies and joined the non-cooperation movement, devoting his life to serving his motherland.

Along with another Gandhian leader, K Kumar, Kelappan became the earliest in Kerala to remove the suffix (Nair) from his name, which implied caste status. He worked tirelessly to eliminate untouchability and empower Harijans, establishing numerous Harijan hostels and schools throughout Kerala.

He was at the vanguard of the Swadeshi Movement in Kerala and worked hard to establish a base for Khadi and Village Industries, which promoted self-reliance through the use of locally manufactured products.

Kelappan emphasised the transforming role of education in creating a progressive society. He founded educational institutions and fought for universal access to education, seeing it as the foundation for a better future.

He was a key figure in the well-known Vaikom Satyagraha and the leader of the Guruvayur Satyagraha in 1932, which attempted to challenge untouchability and struggle for temple entry for all Hindus, irrespective of their castes.

Journalist with a Difference

He was one of the founding directors of Mathrubhumi Daily, which was established as part of the Nationalist Movement in 1923, and later became its editor in 1929 and 1936. During the

1950s, he also worked as an editor for another daily, Samadarshi.

As a journalist, Kelappan used the newspaper and media to raise awareness about social concerns and campaign for change. He amplified the voices of the underprivileged and raised social awareness among the masses through his newspapers. His powerful writing acted as a catalyst for consolidating public opinion and accelerating societal progress.

Salt Marches in Kerala

The Salt Satyagraha, instigated by Gandhi, had its own impact on Kerala. Payyannur, in Malabar, was the main venue for the Satyagraha in the state. When Gandhi declared the Dandi March, the PCC initiated Salt Marches and camps in Malabar under the leadership of Kerala Gandhi, Kelappan. Many groups of Satyagrahis from various regions of the state marched to Payyannur to participate in the Satyagraha. It sparked a sense of solidarity among the general populace throughout Malabar and Travancore-Cochin. It also boosted the public's quest for opportunity.

6 April 1930, the day Gandhiji breached the salt regulations, was celebrated as a national day in Kerala. On 21 April 1930, under Kelappan's leadership, 32 volunteers from Kozhikode walked to Payyannur and broke the salt law on the beach.

Another group from Palakkad, led by TR Krishnaswamy Aiyar, Moidu Maulavi, and M. Abdul Rehman, took part in the event. Satyagrahis from all over Malabar converged on Payyannur Beach, and the Malabar district captured the attention of the entire country.

Initially, the British ignored the agitation. However, following Gandhiji's arrest on 5th May, the government resorted to suppressing the movement. Kelappan was arrested, and the camp was raided. The government adopted repressive measures. But people, including students, began to participate in the campaign. The movement came to an end with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 4 March 1931.

The First Satyagrahi

Kelappan was chosen as the first Satyagrahi from Kerala to participate in the individual Satyagraha movement (which meant holding to the truth) launched by Mahatma Gandhi. The British Colonial government had committed India to the Second World War without the consent

of the Indian people. To oppose this decision by the foreign government, the Indian National Congress decided to launch individual satyagrahas. Underlying this decision was a strategy of preparing their supporters and the party organisation for the mass movement that was to follow. By 15 May 1941, around 25,000 satyagrahis had courted arrest and demonstrated the commitment of the people towards the freedom movement.

Hero of Vaikom and Guruvayoor Satyagrahas

Kelappan was a key figure in the renowned Vaikom Satyagraha in 1925 and the Guruvayoor Satyagraha in 1932, both of which demanded temple entry rights for the untouchables.

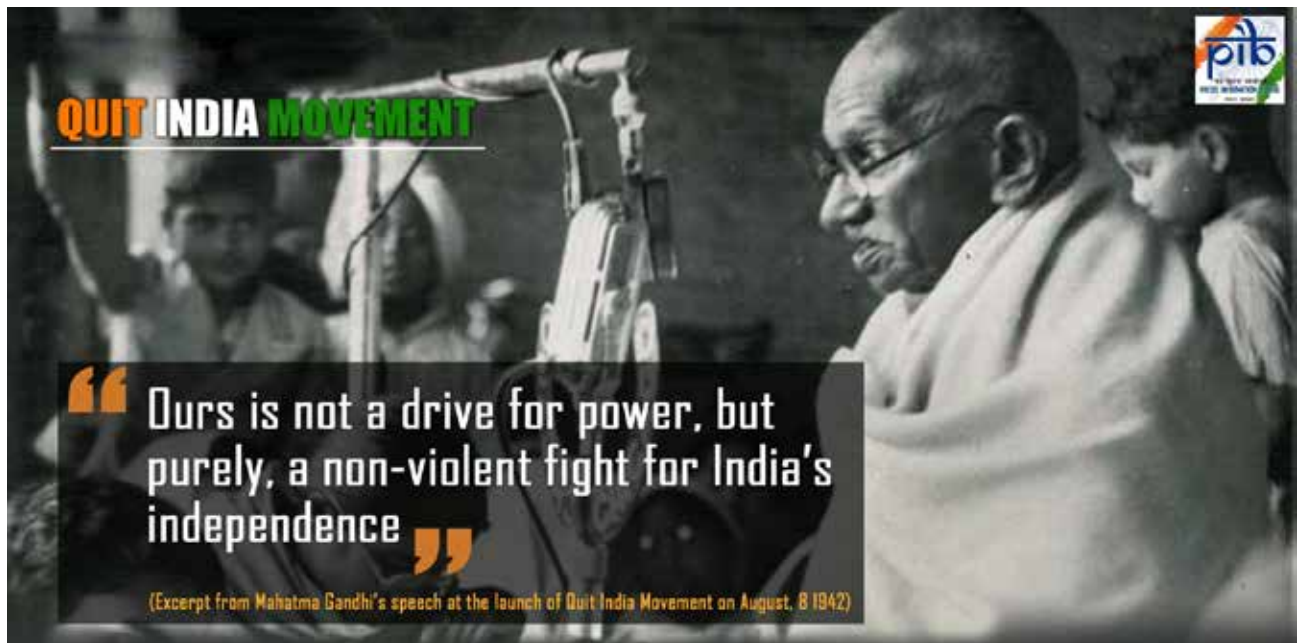
It was probably the first momentous effort in India to abolish untouchability, demanding temple access for untouchables. The 'Savarna Jatha' (demonstration of the upper castes), led by Mannath Padmanabhan, was one of the highlights of the Vaikom Satyagraha.

The struggle lasted nearly 20 months, during which the Satyagrahis were arrested and persecuted in various ways. The Satyagrahis sought merely that the Avarnas be granted the right of passage along the public passages around temples. Gandhiji arrived at Vaikom in March 1925, held a series of discussions with leaders of various caste groups, and met the Maharani Regent at her Varkala camp.

Though the declared objective of the Satyagraha was not fully granted, the movement helped to influence public opinion in the state in favour of temple entry. By 1928, approach roads to all temples were thrown open to all Hindus in the whole of Travancore.

The Guruvayur Satyagraha was another important turning point in the history of concerted struggles against untouchability initiated by Kelappan. It took a new turn on 13 September 1932, when Gandhiji announced his decision to start 'fast unto death' on 21 September in protest against the decision of the government to have a separate electorate for scheduled castes in India.

Kelappan considered it the most opportune moment to attract public attention to the temple entry movement, and on 18 September 1932, he announced his decision to fast unto death in front of the Guruvayur temple until the untouchability was abolished. He began his historic



fast on 21 September at the Eastern Gate of the temple. Kelappan's 12-day hunger strike opened the Sri Guruvayur shrine to Hindu devotees of all castes.

In the Quit India Movement

Kelappan spent several years in prison throughout the freedom struggle. During the Quit India Movement, he was arrested on 9 August 1942, among other important commanders, and remained in jail until 28 June 1945.

After freedom, he played a key role in integrating Malayalam-speaking areas to form a full-fledged state. Kelappan presided over the Aikya (United) Kerala Conference, held at Thrissur in April 1947. Kelappan also served as president of the Malabar District Board, the administrative body for districts in the former Madras Presidency, which was headed by C Rajagopalachari.

To the Parliament

Following independence, Kelappan left the Congress Party. He joined the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party and was elected to Parliament from the Ponnani Lok Sabha constituency in 1952. He also vigorously participated in the Mayyazhi (Mahe) freedom struggle against the French administration in the 1950s until Mahe was liberated on 16 July 1954, and merged with the Indian Union.

At the end of his term as a Member of Parliament, Kelappan left active politics and became a full-time

Sarvodaya volunteer. He was actively associated with the *Bhoodan* Movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave in Kerala. He was the founder president of almost all major Gandhian organisations like Kerala Sarvodaya Mandal, Kerala Sarvodaya Sangh, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Seva Sadan, Kerala Gandhi Samarak Nidhi, and the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Kozhikode.

A Visionary with a Mission

Kelappan was a great visionary who initiated a Rural Institute with the support of the Government of India to promote rural development and education in engineering, public health, agriculture, and the humanities. It was established in 1963 and was renamed Kelappaji College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology (KCAET) under the Government of Kerala in 1976. KCAET, the one and only Agricultural Engineering College of Kerala State, is located in Tavanur village on the southern banks of the holy river, Bharathapuzha.

Kelappan never aspired for power or position. His whole life was a saga of selfless service to the nation. He was at the forefront of the Swadeshi Movement and did his best to build up a base of 'constructive programmes' of Mahatma Gandhi, including Khadi and Village industries in Kerala till his last days. He passed away on 6 October 1971. In his honour, India Post issued a commemorative stamp in 1990. □

Gandhian Influence on Freedom Struggle in Telugu Region

DR NAGASURI VENUGOPAL

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The Telugu translation of Gadicharla Harisarvothama Rao's 'Hind Swaraj', the first book of Gandhiji, came out in 1920. This brought the Gandhi wave to the Telugu land. One can find articles about the success stories of Gandhiji in Telugu periodicals as early as 1908. In 'Andhra Bharathi' monthly in 1910, Dr Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamayya wrote a detailed essay titled 'Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi' covering his achievements, methods of struggle, and constructive programmes of the South African movement. The hallmark of the impact of Gandhiji on Telugu people was the great success of the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress at Bezawada in 1921 with two lakhs of audience members when the population of Vijayawada town was only forty thousand.

After twelve years of the first Indian freedom struggle and the inception of the first three Indian universities, Mahatma Gandhi was born. He grew up and, went to England to study Law, but since he could not get a good job migrated to South Africa in April 1893 for livelihood. When he was thrown out of the First Class Whites-only carriage of the British Railways on 7 June 1893, he protested the arrogance of the mighty British rulers of South Africa. He studied in-depth the rules and regulations of the British Railways before lodging his protest. This type of studious research and multifaceted planning became the hallmark of the political strategy of Mahatma Gandhi. The incident that occurred at Pietermaritzburg station turned our timid Gandhi into a great leader of world. As a first step the Natal Indian Congress was inaugurated in South Africa on 22 August 1894 leading South Africa to become a small research lab to experiment with the concept of 'Satyagraha'.

Meanwhile in India, during the same decades, schools and colleges started in a modest way, and printing presses and the publication of periodicals also started in a humble way. The Bombay-Madras



Kanneganti Hanumanthu



Potti Sreeramulu

railway line came into existence in 1871, whereas Calcutta-Madras line was built in 1899. An interesting point to be noted is that these two railway lines pass through Telugu land for a sizable distance of a few hundred kilometres. This helped carry the messages of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, as well as those of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed in Bombay with national representation. With the initiative of Prafulla Chandra Ray, the great patriot and scientist, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi could participate for the first time in the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta during 1901-02.

The Nizam of Deccan first gave up the coastal area of the present-day Andhra Pradesh and again in 1800 donated the backward districts of Bellary, Anantapur, Kadapa, and Kurnool to the British in return for political, military, and protection, while he kept Telangana districts with him. Hence we see two different cultures—one in British-Andhra (mostly the present-day Andhra Pradesh) and the other in Telangana of Nizam. The influences

of visionary reformers like Kandukuri Veeresilingam (born 1848), Raghupathi Venkatarathnam (1862), Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham (1867) were tremendous and made this land very fertile to cultivate the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma. The national and political weekly 'Krishna Patrika' was launched in 1902 by Koda Venkatappayya and named after the undivided Krishna district from Bandar (or Machilipatnam). The freedom fighter and great businessman Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao started 'Andhra Patrika' as a weekly from Bombay in 1908. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamayya, Kopalle Hanumantha Rao, etc. took the initiative to start Andhra Jatiya Kalasala (the National College) in 1910 at Machilipatnam. In 1914, the weekly 'Andhra Patrika' was shifted from Bombay to Madras, and a powerful daily newspaper with the spirit of freedom struggle retaining the same name was also added from this institution.

On 11 September 1906, Gandhiji proposed the idea of 'Satyagraha' and explained its new way of peacefully fighting for freedom in South Africa. In the middle of July 1914, Gandhiji successfully completed his struggle on behalf of the native Indians of South Africa and came back to India in the month of January 1915. Within five months after coming back to India, Gandhiji visited Nellore in Andhra region in the month of May and participated in a meeting pertaining to social reforms, in which Telugu luminaries, like Nyapathi Subba Rao, Mocharla Ramachandra Rao, D Pattibhirami Reddy and Valluri Suryanarayana Rao, participated. And again, next month, Gandhiji visited the same town while travelling.

From 1915, Gandhiji visited, travelled, and stayed in the Telugu region in 1919, 1920, 1921 (twice), 1925, 1927, 1929, 1933, 1934, 1937, and 1946. The interested readers can refer to the 1062 page volume 'Andhra Pradesh lo Gandhiji' (Gandhiji in Andhra Pradesh), edited by the reputed literary personality Anjaneyulu Kodali and published by the Telugu Academy in 1978, for a detailed account of various meetings and discussions of Gandhiji on numerous topics and issues like freedom struggle, social issues, religion, language, untouchability, non-cooperation, khadi, agriculture, health, and hygiene. One can find articles about the success stories of Gandhiji in Telugu periodicals as early as 1908. In 'Andhra Bharathi' monthly in 1910, Dr Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamayya wrote a

detailed essay titled 'Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi' covering his achievements, methods of struggle, and constructive programmes of the South African movement.

In 1914, Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao wrote a similar article in Telugu titled 'The Sacrifice of Gandhi', in his Andhra Patrika annual number. Rayaprolu Subbarao, the doyen of modern romantic Telugu poetry, wrote an essay entitled 'Bhagawan Mohandas Karunasandra Gandhi' in the same volume. In 1916, there were two biographies on Gandhi in Telugu, by S V Rangacharyulu and Boddapati Seshagiri Rao. Again, there were three more, one in 1920 by P Narasimha Rao and the other two in 1921 by Manikonda Sathyanarayana Sasthry and Athmakur Govindacharyulu separately. From 1915, Damaraju Pundarikashudu (born 1896) started writing the Indian story of Gandhiji as traditional Telugu poetic theatrical scripts like 'Gandhi Mahodayam', 'Gandhi Vijayam', 'Panchala Parbhavam', 'Ranabheri', etc. for performances. To ban these Telugu dramas by this great writer, the British Parliament had a special sitting to sharpen their legal framework. The Telugu translation of Gadicharla Harisarvothama Rao's 'Hind Swaraj', the first book of Gandhiji, came out in 1920. This was the opening scenario of his impact on Telugu land.

Digumarthi Hanumantha Rao (born 1890) happened to meet Gandhiji for the first time in 1915 in the office of the Servants of India Society in Pune. The personality and ideology of Gandhiji greatly impressed Hanumantha Rao, hence he went to Sabarmati Ashram and spent a few months there and also met Chaturvedula Venkata Krishayya (born

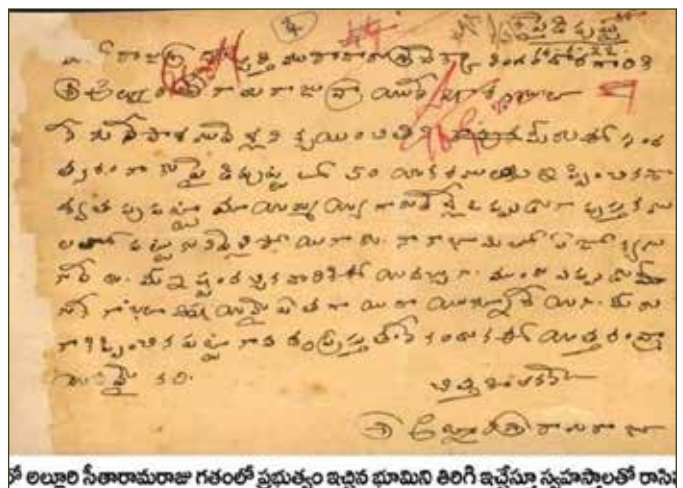
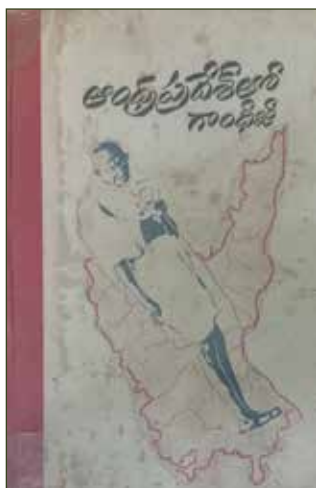
1894), who was already an inmate of the ashram. With the advice of Gandhiji, these two friends came to Nellore to start an ashram on the banks of the river Pinakini with the help of Ponaka Kanakamma (born 1892), who was a follower of Darsi Chenchayya, the Ghadar hero earlier. Hence, on 7 April 1921 Gandhiji, after walking along with thousands of Dalits in a rally, inaugurated Pinakini Ashram, the second ashram in India on Gandhian principles next only to Sabarmati.

The hallmark of the impact of Gandhiji on Telugu people was the great success of the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress at Bezawada in 1921 with two lakhs of audience members when the population of Vijayawada town was only forty thousand. Pingali Venkayya (born 1876), who had been working on a book entitled 'A National Flag for India' for four years, studied the flags of 30 countries and met Gandhiji during the sessions. Gandhiji has recorded his observations regarding our national flag in his journal 'Young India' in its issue of 13 April 1921.

Due to the dearth of space, the entire history cannot be recapitulated here, but three great events occurred on the Andhra coast that were unique in the struggle for Indian independence.

Chirala-Perala Movement

It was led by Duggirala Gopala Krishnaiah (born 1889), who chose to mortgage his property to go to the University of Edinburgh to earn a postgraduate degree in Economics. With his well-organised 'Ramadandu' (meaning Army of Rama), he played a prominent role in organising the Indian National Congress annual session at Bezawada in 1921.



When the Government of Madras presidency wanted to combine the villages of Chirala and Perala in Guntur district of those days into a municipality to yield tax revenue of Rs 40,000 instead of earlier Rs 4,000 per annum. With the advice of Gandhiji, Duggirala Gopala Krishnaiah requested the residents of Chirala town to shift to a new settlement called 'Ramnagar'. Nearly 13,582 residents, out of a total population of 15,326 of Chirala town, responded to his call on 25 April 1921 and shifted to Ramnagar, where he set up an assembly compressing members from all castes and a court of arbitration. This great moment continued till February 1922 and ended with the great despair as the British arrested and imprisoned Gopala Krishnaiah. Though this was an unsuccessful saga, it is still a unique episode in the history of Satyagraha which attracted the entire nation.

Pullari Satyagraha of Palnadu

The British imposed a tax called 'Pullari' on farmers for using forest produce and grazing their cattle in the forest when there was a famine in 1920-21. The officials used to take the cattle away from the farmers; hence, it led to regular clashes between the peasants and the police. In the police firing, one peasant was killed and a few others were injured. Around this time, Gandhiji called for the non-cooperation movement, and with this, Kanneganti Hanumanthu (born 1870) organised the Satyagraha of Pullari. Under his leadership, the people of Palnadu organised a social boycott of revenue and forest department officials. All goods and services were denied to these officials, including food, laundry, barbering, etc. There was a great hartal under the leadership of Duggirala Gopala Krishnaiah in July 1921, when the district collector ordered one-year imprisonment for Unnava Lakshminarayana and Vedantham Lakshminarasimhachar.

The British government had arrested Hanumanthu multiple times and even offered to make him a Zamindar for 45 villages in the region of Durgi, but the great patriot refused. The village Karanam (revenue official) betrayed Hanumanthu, and the police besieged the village and shot him 24 to 26 times. Even the police prevented the villagers from offering him water. Hanumanthu shouted the Vande Mataram slogan for nearly 6 hours and died on 26 February 1922.

Pedanandipadu no-tax movement

In response to the call given by the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1921 held

in Ahmedabad, the Andhra Congress Committee decided to conduct a no-tax movement in the Gandhian way in 18 villages of Pedanandipadu firka (a group of villages) of the then Guntur district. At that time, all the regional Telugu leaders like Duggirala Gopala Krishnaiah, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Gollapudi Seetharam Sasthry, and Madabhushi Vedantham Narasimhacharyulu were imprisoned; hence, Parvathaneni Veerayya Choudhary (born 1886) conducted the movement in a very Gandhian way, which attracted many satyagrahis throughout the country.

The Chauri Chaura incident took place on 4 February 1922, in Gorakhpur district of the then United Province, when the police fired upon a large group of protesters participating in the non-cooperation movement. In retaliation, the demonstrators attacked and set fire to the police station, leading to the deaths of 3 civilians and 23 policemen. With this violent move, Mahatma Gandhi halted the non-cooperation movement on a national level on 12 February 1922. Apart from this, Gandhiji thought of something to be done to inculcate the concept of Satyagraha among freedom fighters. To impart training to satyagrahis, a unique ashram called 'Gautami Satyagraha Ashram' was inaugurated near Rajahmundry on 4 February 1925. When Kasturba Gandhi died in 1944, this ashram was converted to take up different activities for women's upliftment at the suggestion of Gandhiji.

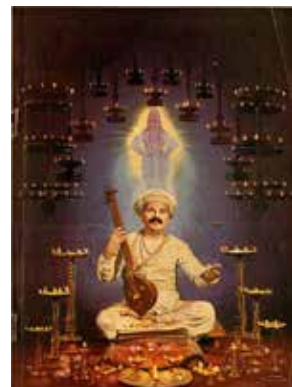
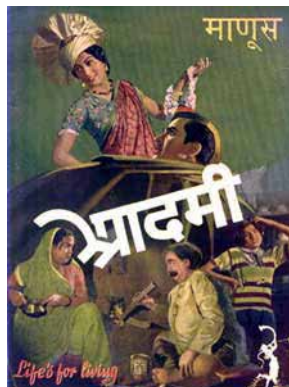
Veluri Sivarama Sastri, the great scholar and avadhani (literary performer), went to Sabarmati Ashram in the late 1920s to study and learn Gujarati in order to translate the autobiography of Gandhiji into Telugu. Dr Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamayya brought out the history of the Indian National Congress from 1885 to 1935. In 1938, the Nizam of Telangana banned Gandhiji's visits in his territory, along with 68 newspapers and periodicals. On 19 October 1952 Potti Sreeramulu sat for a Gandhian Satyagraha in Madras for 58 days and sacrificed his life on 15 December 1952 for the reorganisation of states on a language basis. As a result, on 1 November 1956 a number of states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu were formed.

There is much evidence in the annals of our history to show and analyse the immense and invaluable impact of Gandhiji on Telugu land and its people. □

Celluloid Patriotism

ANUJA AVINASH CHAULKAR

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India, the land of storytelling, has always had numerous art forms to narrate stories. Cinema is a relatively newer yet one of the most popular art forms—for entertainment, education, employment, and as a means of enlightenment for many.

Indian cinema has been around for more than 100 years now and has played a significant role during the freedom struggle, serving as a powerful medium to evoke public sentiment, foster nationalistic feelings, and challenge colonial rule.

In its initial stages, it portrayed themes of patriotism, valour and defiance against oppression. Films like Dadasaheb Phalke's 'Raja Harishchandra' (1913), Kanjibhai Rathod's 'Bhakta Vidhur' (1921) and H M Reddy's 'Bhakta Prahlada' (1931) depicted moral courage and righteousness, resonating with the Indian Nationalist Movement. It provided a platform for political discourse as actors and filmmakers actively participated in nationalist movements and used their influence to support causes like the Quit India Movement of 1942, amplifying the voices of freedom fighters. Composers like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Salil Chowdhury infused nationalist fervour into their compositions, creating melodies that resonated deeply with the aspirations of a free India.

Cinema played a significant role in the freedom movement in India, and Maharashtra in particular, since film industry initially flourished in Mumbai. Marathi cinema actively propagated nationalistic values and ideals through its films. Directors like Vishnupant Damle, V Shantaram, Bhalji Pendharkar, etc. used their films to depict the struggles and aspirations of the common people, aligning their narratives with the broader goals of the freedom movement.

Films such as 'Sant Tukaram' (1936) and 'Duniya Na Mane' (1937) celebrated Maharashtra's cultural heritage while advocating for social justice and independence. Films portrayed historical figures like Shivaji Maharaj, Rani Lakshmibai, etc. as symbols of resistance, inspiring generations to fight for independence. Films like 'Mahatma Phule' (1954) and 'Ramshastri' (1944) celebrated local heroes and cultural icons, reinforcing pride in Maharashtra's history and traditions amidst the struggle for freedom.

Thus, Indian Cinema during the freedom struggle was not just a form of entertainment but a potent instrument of social change and political awakening. It played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, nurturing a spirit of resistance, and ultimately contributing to the journey towards India's independence in 1947. □

Contribution of Indian Languages to the Freedom Movement

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The role of literature in social movements is often understated and, at times, even discounted. When one goes through the annals of history, one can easily find many instances when literary creations, oral or written, played a significant role in social movements. Caught off guard and unnerved by the literary onslaught in all the languages and across the country, the British started banning books that had even the slightest nationalistic or patriotic fervour. Together, as the idea to gain freedom with urgency swept through large parts of India, people started to trace their cultural roots and take pride in their country and its rich and ancient cultural heritage once again.

The Indian Independence Movement was not a singular, unidirectional, and homogenous social movement, as it is assumed very often by laypeople and scholars alike. The movement contained within it a large number of streams, some purely cultural practices, some expressions of the culture of the country like language and literature. Each stream brought with it a number of sub-streams.

Over and above, the entire movement, with its complexities and layers of expressions of cultural structures, took the then British rulers by surprise even though they were well aware that India is a land of hundreds of cultural traditions. When the expressions took centre stage, all with the single focus of evicting the oppressors from the land, the British Raj did not know which direction they had to look in and were left confused and clueless.

The primary direction in which all the Indian languages contributed in this regard was in increasing nationalistic fervour among the masses and bringing unity to the various communities of India. At the time of the Independence movement, India was divided into a number of kingdoms and

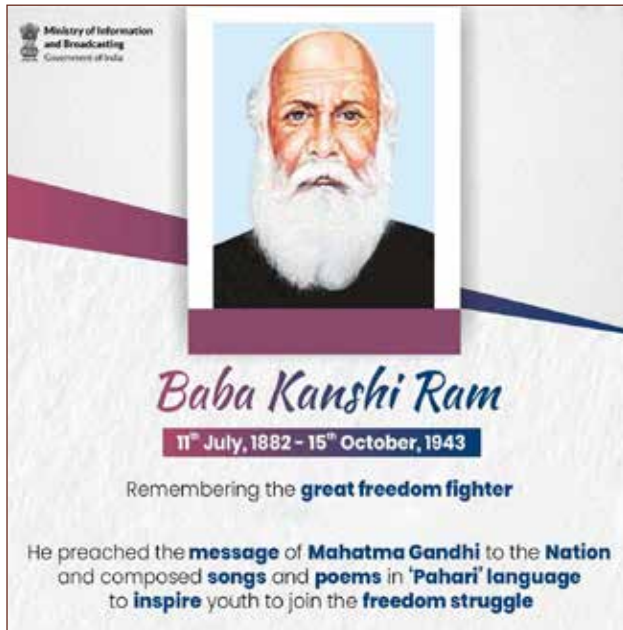
communities. While people had identity towards the nation through cultural commonalities, they fundamentally had allegiance more towards their own communities first and then to the nation.

Poems and songs played a significant role in this. One has to remember that in the period leading up to eventual independence in August 1947, the majority of the masses were pretty much illiterate.

Due to their universal appeal and the fact that one need not be educated to understand, feel, and appreciate them, poetry easily reached the masses, sometimes as songs set to tune and the fire of nationalism spread faster than fire.

All of them had one goal—to evict the oppressors from the land and free India from the clutches of the British. Not only eminent poets, but songs by unknown writers and local ballads contributed to the awakening.

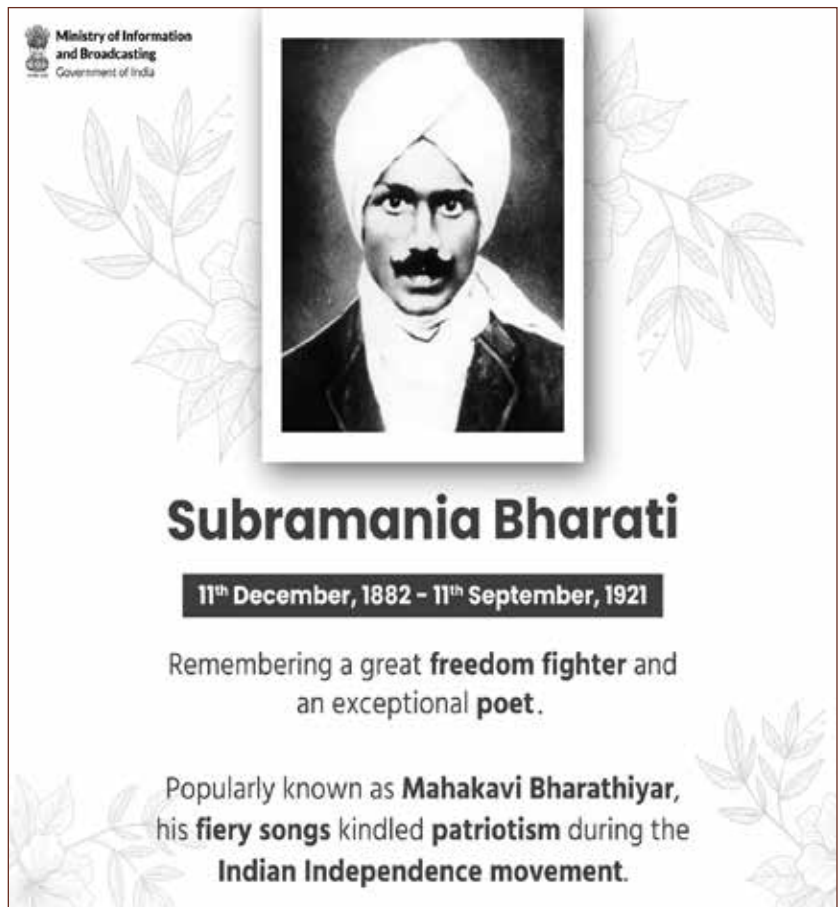
The role of literature in social movements is often understated and, at times, even discounted. When one goes through the annals of history, one can easily find many instances when literary creations, oral or written, played a significant role in social movements.



In the Indian subcontinent, one can find that during medieval period, when social renaissance took place, the literary creations of Shiva Sharanas, Dasas, Marathi saint-poets, Aazhwars, Sant Kabir, and others played a significant role in bringing diverse communities together, empowering them to counter hegemony of different kinds. Bhakti literature of the medieval period led to a cultural revolution that is not often well represented, and it was not limited to one region or community of the country but across the states and kingdoms. This established that everyone has a fundamental right to Godhead.

So, it is not a great surprise that literature played a pivotal role in the Indian Independence Movement in the modern period too. Great minds, during the 19th and 20th centuries, in all languages like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar, Khandekar and other luminaries in Marathi; Shivaram Karanth, Kuvempu, Siddavanahalli Krishna Sharma and others in Kannada; Gurbada Apparao, Mangipudi Venkataraya Sharma, Tummala Sitaramamoorthy, Rayaprolu

Subbarao, Gurram Joshua, Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham, Puttamarthi Narayacharyulu, Cherukuvada Venkata Ramaiah, Duvvuri Ramireddy, Lakshmi Narayana, Karunashree, Garimella Satyanarayana and others in Telugu; Subramania Bharati, Bharati Daasan, Naamakkal Kavignar, V O Chidambaram, P Jeevanandam, V V S Iyer, Rajaji and others in Tamil; Mahatma Gandhi, Gopabandhu Das, Govardhan Ram Tripathi, Narhari Dwarkadas Parikh, Umashankar Joshi, Sundarji Betai, Sundaram, Narasingh Rao, Mansukhlal Jhaveri, Badarayan and others in Gujarati; Vallathol Menon, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Sahodaran Ayyappan and others in Malayalam; Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Madhusudan Dutta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Kazi Nazrul Islam and others in Bengali; Maithili Sharan Gupta, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Jaishankar Prasad, Badrinath Bhatt, Makhanlal Chaturvedi, Bechan Sharma Ugra, and Govind Vallabh Pant along with Munshi Premchand in Hindi, to name just a few, all contributed in rich vein to the Indian Independence Movement.



There is yet another aspect to these literary contributions to Indian freedom movement and in fact that proved to be very crucial at important moments in the 20th century at least.

Caught off guard and unnerved by the literary onslaught in all the languages and across the country, the British started banning books that had even the slightest nationalistic or patriotic fervour.

It is exactly at this moment that journals and magazines in mainstream languages helped the writers keep contributing to the movement and enabled the freedom fighters to carry their message to the masses.

In fact, when the government of the day started cracking down on journals and magazines in all the languages, that led to another interesting development: the emergence of underground journals and books.

The value of journals, dailies, magazines, and journalists in this regard is invaluable. They risked everything they had to help the writers contribute to the freedom movement.

Journals and dailies in many languages resorted to satire and using a twilight language so that the alien rulers would not understand the message easily whereas locals could easily grasp it and spread the information or story. The journalism and print medium of the era played a huge role in the freedom movement gathering momentum.

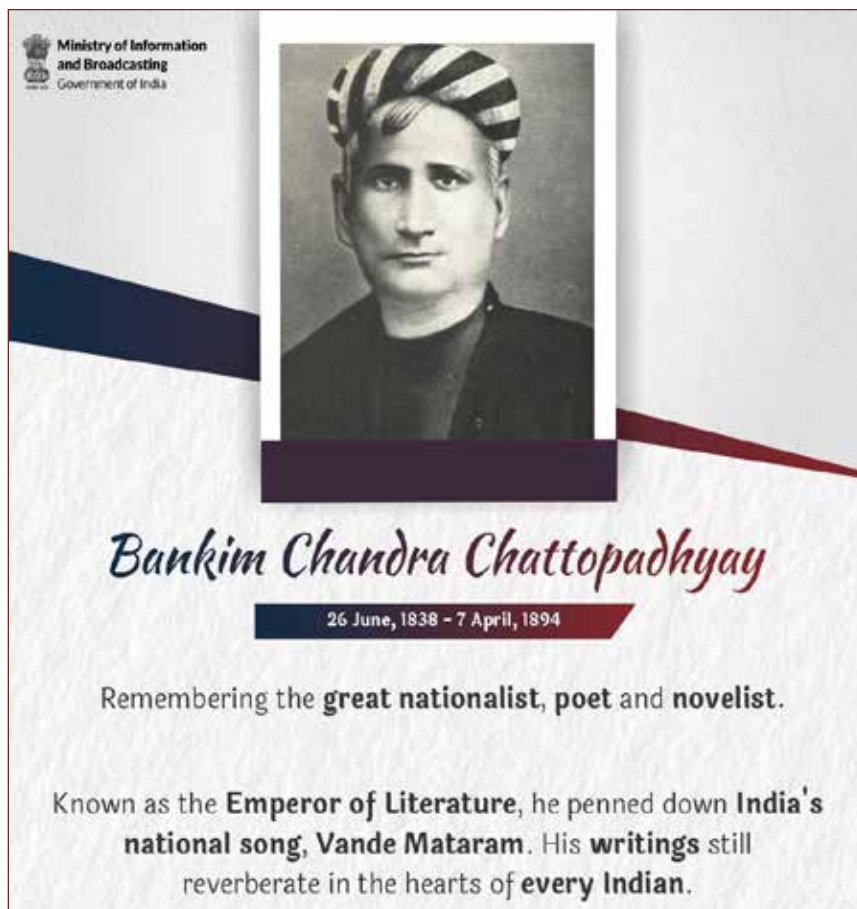
Further, all these literary doyens had the blessings of spiritual giants of the country. The blessings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo, apart from great saints from all over the country, are something that is not talked about much.

It is well established that most of the freedom fighters, including distinguished personalities involved in the movement, periodically took the blessings of the great saints of the region from where they came. It is indeed true that this aspect of spiritual force guiding the social movements has not been discussed in detail, especially with reference to the Indian Independence Movement.

When the British realised what was happening, they went after the journals and magazines all over the country. But there was a twist that they did not expect. Not only did India have hundreds of cultures, but cultural expressions were also multifarious.

One of them was through plays. India has always been a land of performance. Much before rules were framed and refined over the centuries, India gave the world top-class treatise on performance with rules, the Natya Shastra. So, it is no surprise that the masses took to every street corner to enact street plays.

Every culture, community, or society creates its own myths. Myths need not always be imaginative stories. They are one of the ways through which culture gets preserved and expressed, just like poems, plays, stories, paintings, dance, or architecture.



Indian mythology, especially the two national epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, has percolated deep into society and been part and parcel of Indian culture. They are also the most long-lasting cultural expressions in the world.

When people staged street plays spreading nationalistic and patriotic messages, masses in all the languages deployed a highly ingenious and innovative tactic—they used mythology heavily to distract the British Raj. But in the plays, British were characterised as Ravana, Kamsa, or Hiranyakashipu, etc., while Mahatma Gandhi, Balgangadhar Tilak, and other leaders were portrayed as mythological and divine characters that stood by and propagated Dharma.

In the space of just six or seven decades, these messages percolated into countryside sayings, emerged as proverbs, and even Mahatma Gandhi became part of folklore in remote rural spaces. Later, when cinema became a popular medium, these became part of the visual medium, bringing life to the vast oral tradition in respect of Indian Independence Movement.

Together, as the idea to gain freedom with urgency swept through large parts of India, people started to trace their cultural roots and take pride in their country and its rich and ancient cultural heritage once again.

Mahatma Gandhi, apart from his public

speeches, inspired and energised countless youth in India through his writings, especially in Navjivan and The Young India. He singlehandedly shaped the idea of young India and initiated public discussions around the country on several aspects pertaining to India, including Swarajya. In fact, along with the writings of Karl Marx, the writings of Mahatma Gandhi stand as a testimony to the influence of literature in social movements. Till date, Gandhi's writings continue to inspire people, not only in India but in many countries across the world. It is no surprise then that Gandhi's writings heavily influenced and inspired all the communities of the country.

For the Indian freedom movement, tales, poems, songs, and plays in every language of the country, many of which are still oral and unwritten, contributed rich and vibrant content that not only inspired millions to join the cause of the independence of the country but also enabled them to retrace their cultural roots and empowered them to counter hegemony. That, in turn, led to the social revolution, which resulted in enhanced social justice for all classes.

The language and literature of every cultural tradition of the country, numbering in the hundreds, activated the innermost yearning of human beings to be free all the time. This phenomenon, in such a large measure, remains unparalleled in the history of the world. □

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Youth Consciousness for Freedom in Bengal

RABI RANJAN SEN

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The Partition of Bengal announced by the British on 16 July 1905, by Viceroy Lord Curzon added fuel to this fire of nationalism, and the Bengal anti-Partition movement introduced the twin weapons of Swadeshi (use of indigenous goods) and Boycott (of British-manufactured goods), which together were to be a distinctive feature of the Indian Independence Movement even after this particular struggle. The Yugantar, called the ‘paper of undiluted armed revolution’ by its founders, was soon described in governmental reports as “the first and most pernicious of the revolutionary papers of Calcutta.” In its first edition, published on 18 March 1906, the Yugantar boldly declared that for them, Swadesh (the Motherland) comes first and Swadeshi (i.e., indigenously manufactured goods) afterwards. The fact that the freedom fight and particularly the armed struggle never saw a lull after 1908 and was continued by the next generation of revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose, Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin), Bhagat Singh and his group, Surya Sen, and many others is a testament to Barin’s prophetic feeling that the work of the first group was not so much to militarily achieve a successful revolution but more to rouse public opinion and prepare the ground for the next generation of revolutionaries.



fter the bid for independence from British dominance in 1857 was militarily defeated and the British sought to crush the spirit of the nation through mass hangings, terror, and atrocities, particularly in those areas that had risen in revolt, the next few decades were marked by sporadic local rebellions like the Bhuyan, Juang, Munda, and Koya uprisings and the brave attempt by Vasudeo Balwant Phadke to challenge the might of the empire with the help of his committed band of men comprising of Kols, Bhils, Ramoshis, etc. The next phase of the revolutionary struggle started in Maharashtra and Bengal in the

span of a few years at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The killing of Plague Commissioner of Pune, Walter Charles Rand and his military escort, Lt. Ayerst, in Pune in 1897 by the Chapekar brothers marks the start of this new phase of armed struggle.

The ideological impetus for this new phase was provided in Maharashtra by Bal Gangadhar Tilak with the mass celebration of the exploits of Chhatrapati Shivaji through the annual *Shivaji Utsav* started in 1894 and in Bengal with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Anandamath* in 1882, which evoked the imagery of the Motherland as



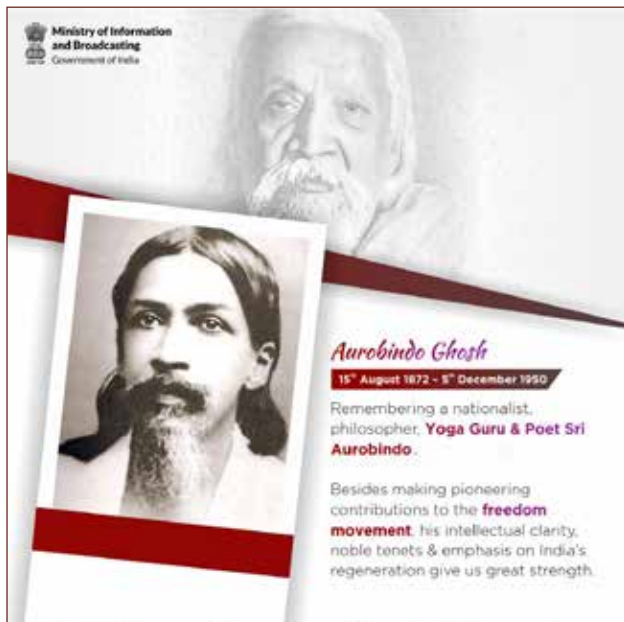
the Divine Mother and contained the song *Vande Mataram*, which was later to become the rallying cry of the freedom movement and is today our National Song. Apart from the writings of Bankim and some others like Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, the rousing call of Swami Vivekananda to the Indian youth to return to their cultural roots and be imbued with the spirit of patriotism also directly fueled the freedom movement and particularly the armed struggle.

In Bengal, this new consciousness of the youth found expression in the founding of the *Anushilan Samiti* in 1902 by Satishchandra Basu, Barrister Pramathanath Mitra, and Jatindranath Banerjee, ostensibly for cultural activities but actually for secretly inculcating nationalist ideas among the youth of Kolkata (then Calcutta). Some attempts at founding secret societies had been made even earlier and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, in the recollections of his childhood in the book *Jibon Smriti*, says that in the 1870s the children at Jorasanko had toyed with forming 'secret societies' under the leadership of his elder brother Jyotirindranath Tagore, but the *Anushilan Samiti* was the first serious attempt that set in motion the entire phase of revolutionary activities in Bengal known as Bengal's *Agnijug* (the age of fire).

The Partition of Bengal announced by the British on 16 July 1905, by Viceroy Lord Curzon added fuel to this fire of nationalism, and the Bengal anti-Partition movement introduced the twin weapons of *Swadeshi* (use of indigenous goods) and Boycott (of

British-manufactured goods), which together were to be a distinctive feature of the Indian Independence Movement even after this particular struggle. This movement also gave rise to revolutionary activities as an offshoot of the *Swadeshi* movement, and in the first active revolutionary group and the initial attempts to target oppressive British officials, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghosh, later Sri Aurobindo, played a pioneering role.

Barindra Kumar, more popularly known in Bengal as Barin Ghosh, was born in 1880 in England as the youngest of five siblings. Among his elder brothers were the poet Monomohan Ghosh and, of course, Aurobindo. His father was a renowned civil surgeon Krishna Dhan Ghosh, who was an Anglophile and wanted his children to be brought up immersed in European manners and culture. His mother, Swarnalata Devi, was the daughter of Rishi Rajnarayan Bose, a staunch nationalist and social reformer. When Barin was three months old, his mother came back to India with him, leaving the elder brothers in England in the care of some family friends. Barin was brought up initially in Deoghar, where his maternal grandfather resided, and then studied at Patna College, where he went through various experiences like setting up a tea stall. He also stayed in Baroda with his elder brother Aurobindo, who was then in the service of the Gaekwad. In 1902, Barin came back to Kolkata and, along with Jatindranath Banerjee, took part in the activities of the *Anushilan* group. However, along with some others like Abinash Bhattacharya, Debabrata Basu, and Bhupendranath Datta (the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda), he formed a separate group inclined towards more radical revolutionary activities known as the *Yugantar*, after a newspaper by that name that the new group founded. The *Yugantar*, called the 'paper of undiluted armed revolution' by its founders, was soon described in governmental reports as "the first and most pernicious of the revolutionary papers of Calcutta." In its first edition, published on 18 March 1906, the *Yugantar* boldly declared that for them, *Swadesh* (the Motherland) comes first and *Swadeshi* (i.e., indigenously manufactured goods) afterwards. In its third edition, Aurobindo wrote that our goal is to obtain freedom in the educational, commercial, and political spheres. On 7 June 1907, the *Yugantar*, along with the *Sandhya*



founded by Brahmasambandhab Upadhyay and the *Bande Mataram* founded by Bipin Chandra Pal and subsequently edited by Aurobindo Ghosh, were sent notices by the government on the charge of sedition. Bhupendranath Datta was arrested for this offence and sentenced to one year of rigorous imprisonment by the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Kingsford. In spite of the seizing of their press and the lodging of continuous sedition cases, the *Yugantar* continued to publish, and perhaps because of this crackdown, its circulation increased from 200 to 7,000 and subsequently crossed the figure of 20,000 and emerged as the most popular periodical of the time!

From the beginning of that year, i.e., 1907, Barin had begun to stay at a garden house located in what was then the suburbs of Calcutta in the Maniktala area. By October, he had formed a dedicated band of revolutionaries with that garden house as their secret den, led by himself and another famous revolutionary leader, Upendranath Banerjee. Among the other notable members of this first revolutionary society in Bengal were Ullaskar Dutta, Prafulla Chaki, Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar, Abinash Bhattacharya, Prafulla Chakraborty, Nalinikanta Gupta, Paresh Mullick, Shishir Ghosh, Indrabhushan Roy, Bijay Kumar Nag, Sachin Sen, Narendranath Bakshi, Purna Chandra Sen, Birendranath Ghosh, Nirapada Roy, etc. The ideology and activities of this group were ultimately inspired by Aurobindo Ghosh, though he never directly associated himself with armed activities.

From police records seized during the crackdown and from the later reminiscences of the participants, we come to know about the hard life and the rigorous training imparted to the members of this first organised revolutionary group. The activities of the group were twofold: spreading the ideology in secret and recruiting new members; and secondly, organising the martial aspect, preparing bombs, training in firearms, etc. The syllabus of the members consisted of arms training, political training, physical culture, and religious education. They were taught economics, history, and geography as part of their political training. They had to read the works of Mazzini as well as those of the nationalist Marathi-Bengali writer Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, among others. On one hand, they were given training in various chemicals and explosives to make bombs, and on the other, they had to study the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* too. The typical training imparted to members consisted of getting up at 4 AM, doing physical exercise and meditation for two hours, followed by study time, and then cooking followed by target practice. The same routine continued in the evening until 10 at night. After completing their training, the revolutionaries had to take two oaths, one in Sanskrit and the other in Bangla. In the Sanskrit oath, they had to swear in the name of *Varuna*, *Agni*, and other Vedic gods and in the name of their ancestors that they would give up all pleasures of life for the purpose of establishing *Dharma Rajya*. After this, they paid obeisance to the sword and took it in their hands in the name of the Divine Goddess *Adya Shakti*. While taking the Bangla oath too, they had to hold the sword and the *Gita* in their hands.

The first attempt at armed resistance was the attempted assassination of Bengal Governor Sir Andrew Fraser in November 1907 by putting dynamite underneath his train, but this attempt failed. The same was attempted a month later near Kharagpur, but though his train was heavily damaged, the governor escaped unscathed. In January 1908, an attempt was made to assassinate the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Sir Douglas Kingsford, who had ordered a 14-year-old boy, Sushil Kumar Sen to be brutally flogged. Sir Douglas Kingsford was sent a book with explosives in it such that it would explode on opening the book, but unluckily for the young revolutionaries, Kingsford kept the book on his shelf without opening it! An attempt to assassinate

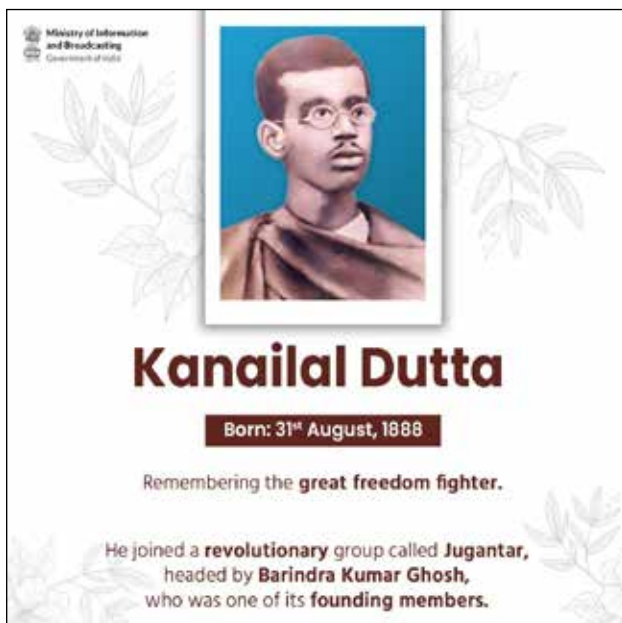
Tardivel, the French Governor of Chandernagore, too was unsuccessful, though Tardivel was injured. Barin now decided that Kingsford had to be assassinated at any cost. Kingsford had in the meantime been transferred to Muzaffarpur in Bihar, and it was decided to send two members to accomplish this task.

At the end of April 1908, Prafulla Chaki from Rangpur (eastern Bengal, now in Bangladesh) and Khudiram Bose from Midnapore were sent to Muzaffarpur along with one very powerful explosive and three revolvers. On 30 April according to their plan, as soon as a horse carriage they thought to be carrying Kingsford came out of the Muzaffarpur Club at 8:30 in the night, they hurled a bomb at it. But unfortunately, the carriage was not carrying Kingsford but a British lady and her daughter. Both of them were seriously injured and passed away later. The duo immediately ran from there and, as planned, went separate ways. Khudiram covered 24 miles in the night and reached Waini, but was captured from there and brought to Muzaffarpur. Prafulla Chaki reached Samastipur the next day and caught a train from there, but unfortunately, he met a police sub-inspector on the train who tried to arrest him at Mokama. In the commotion, Prafulla tried to fire at the police party, but being unsuccessful, he shot himself in the mouth and gave up his life at Mokama station on 2 May 1908.

Khudiram was tried at the Court of the Additional Sessions Judge at Muzaffarpur, found guilty, and

sentenced to death. The High Court too upheld this sentence, and on 11 August 1908, he was hanged to death. The previous day, he had told his lawyer that I would be sacrificing my life without any fear. On the appointed day, he ascended to the gallows with his head held high and with a smile on his face. The *Bande Mataram* reported, "He not only read the Gita but also acted it."

As soon as the news of the Muzaffarpur incident reached Kolkata, an emergency meeting of top police officials was convened at the home of the Police Commissioner on the night of 1 May 1908. Eight raiding parties were formed, and the police swung into action at around four in the morning when there were simultaneous raids on eight locations, including Maniktala's garden house and Aurobindo's sister's residence on Grey Street, where he himself was arrested. Hemchandra Das Kanungo was arrested on Nabakrishna Street along with his chemicals and devices for bomb making. Nirapada Roy, Kanailal Dutta, and others were arrested from different locations along with the recovery of explosive material sufficient for at least 200 bombs. The most successful raid was at the Maniktala garden house, where, along with the arrest of 15 revolutionaries, including Barindra himself, huge quantities of bombs, firearms, explosives, and documents were confiscated. The arrested were taken to the Lalbazar Police Headquarters and, from there, to Alipore Jail. On 15 May 1908, trial began at the Court of the District Magistrate of 24 Parganas District—the court case that would go down in the history of the Indian freedom struggle as the Alipore Bomb Case. This famous case would not only impart a new direction to the freedom struggle but also carve out a space in the nationalist consciousness of Bengal and all of India at that time. Initially, Barin and Ullaskar Dutta were sentenced to death, but the punishment was later reduced to life imprisonment and transfer to the Andaman Cellular Jail. In 1909, he was deported to Andaman and released later under a general amnesty in 1920. On his return to Kolkata, he started a career in writing, edited some journals, and wrote about his experiences during the *Jugantar* phase as well as in the Andamans in his *Atmakatha*, *Bomar Juger Kahini*, *Dharpakor Jug*, and other books in Bengali. For a while, he lived in his elder brother Sri Aurobindo's Pondicherry *Ashram* practicing Yoga under his guidance. He did not involve himself in any kind of politics thereafter.



On his arrest from the Maniktala garden house, Barin famously declared, "My mission is over!" It is pertinent that, as he has repeatedly pointed out in his autobiographical works, he looked upon his mission as to rouse the consciousness of a sleeping nation. The fact that the freedom fight and particularly the armed struggle never saw a lull after 1908 and was continued by the next generation of revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose, Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin), Bhagat Singh and his group, Surya Sen, and many others is a testament to Barin's prophetic feeling that the work of the first group was not so much to militarily achieve a successful revolution but more to rouse public opinion and prepare the ground for the next generation of revolutionaries.

In this, he was spectacularly successful. Public opinion in India and abroad was surprised at the sudden discovery of the daring existence of an armed secret group under the very nose of the British government in the then imperial capital of Calcutta. Many found it difficult to believe that the Bengali *bhadralok*, characterised as effeminate and delicate by the British, could carry on this sort of revolutionary activity. The newspaper 'Indian World' commented, "Say what you may, all this is a glorious vindication of Bengalee character." The 'Observer' published from Lahore stated, "The Bengalee has

been avenged upon Macaulay!"

The *Jugantar* group, under Barin's leadership, failed to carry out any of the targeted assassinations they attempted. However, the military failure at attempted revolution or armed resistance was overshadowed by the political and psychological impact of the audacity of a group of middle-class Bengali youth to challenge the might of the British empire. In popular consciousness, the youth led by Barin and particularly the sacrifice of an 18-year old Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki gave rise to many songs, ballads, and poems that made them immortal martyrs of the freedom movement.

In conclusion, we can say that the success of Barindra Kumar Ghosh and the first organised attempt at revolution lies not so much in what they achieved in their armed expeditions but more in serving as a template for future revolutionary groups who modelled many of their aspects, including the training module with emphasis on a fusion of physical and spiritual training, on the Maniktala group with, however, more success in terms of targets achieved. Thus, we should remember Barindra Kumar today as a pioneer who successfully set the ball rolling for the armed struggle for independence which culminated with the exploits of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army. □

India's Commitment towards TB-Mukt Bharat

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One of the biggest killers, Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease and found in every part of the world. It continues to be a major public health issue of global concern. India carries one of the largest global burden of the disease. The central and state governments are committed to eradicating it by 2025, five years ahead of the global target under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. Let us deep dive into the different aspects of the disease and understand India's initiatives in this direction.

Global burden of TB

TB is an infectious airborne disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (*M.tb*). WHO estimates that close to 1/4th of the global population, are infected with TB. Approximately 13 lakh children get sick with TB each year. Last year, TB was noted to be the world's second leading cause of death from a single infectious agent, after COVID-19. It caused almost twice

as many deaths as HIV/AIDS. In 2022, 1.06 crore were infected from TB and 14 lakh died due to it. TB results in 3,500 deaths on a daily basis.

Tuberculosis is strongly influenced by different social, economic and health-related risk factors. These are undernutrition, diabetes, HIV infection, alcohol use disorders and smoking. According to WHO, on the global scale in 2020, an estimated 19 lakh incident cases of TB were due to undernutrition, 7.4 lakh each to HIV infection and alcohol use disorders, 7.3 lakh to smoking and 3.7 lakh to diabetes. Although, there are regional and national variations. For instance, a high incidence is noticed among the urban population living in slums.

Thirty countries that bear a high TB burden account for 87% of the world's total TB cases. Of these, two-thirds of the global total burden was found in eight countries.

India accounts for the largest share at 27% of the total global cases followed by Indonesia (10%),



China (7.1%), the Philippines (7.0%), Pakistan (5.7%), Nigeria (4.5%), Bangladesh (3.6%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3.0%).

WHO commends India's strides

The World Health Organization (WHO) Global TB Report 2023 has credited India for its noteworthy activities and interventions towards a tuberculosis free country. WHO has appreciated India for its highly significant progress in reducing the incidence of tuberculosis by 16 per cent and mortality due to it by 18 per cent since 2015 (till 2022).

India has been commended for its intensified case detection strategies that have led to the highest-ever cases notification of cases 2022; at more than 24.22 lakh TB cases, these notifications surpassed the pre-COVID levels. A record notification was undertaken in 2023, with 25.5 lakh TB cases notified. Additionally, the treatment coverage has expanded to 80 per cent of the estimated TB cases, a hike of 19 per cent over the previous year.

In an encouraging observation, the WHO report also acknowledges that the pace of decline in India is almost double the pace at which global TB incidence is declining, which is 8.7 per cent. In addition, WHO has also made a downward revision of the TB mortality rates (from 4.94 lakhs in 2021 to 3.31 lakhs in 2022). The reduction of over 34 per cent is based on cause-of-death data for 2014–2019 collected from the sample registration system (SRS).

Key Initiatives to Make India TB-Mukt

It is important to note that even though Tuberculosis is very infectious, it is entirely preventable and a curable disease when detected in a timely manner and the treatment is fully completed.

Saddled with the burden of the highest level of global TB incidence, Government of India has decided to tackle the menace of TB in a mission mode. The UN and WHO have committed to end the TB epidemic. TB is part of SDG Target 3.3 which states: 'End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases by 2030'. But Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced in 2018 that India will drive out TB from the country by 2025, five years ahead of the global target. This has spurred the

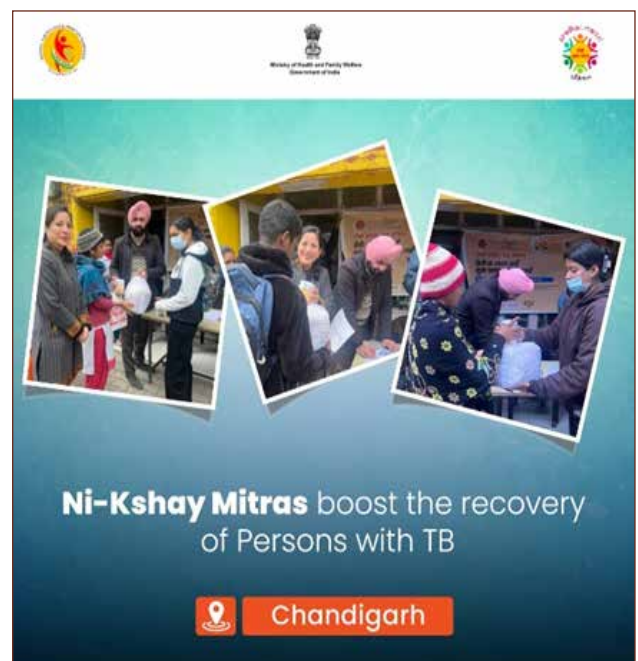
policy makers and the agencies, working towards a TB-Free India, to work with focussed energy. At the Stop TB Partnership meeting at Varanasi in March 2023, reaffirming India's commitment towards ensuring a TB-free society, the PM stated that "the commitment and determination with which India dedicated itself to tackling TB after 2014 is unprecedented."

With the goal of achieving SDGs related to TB by 2025, Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is implementing the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) with the following objectives:

1. Early diagnosis of TB patients, prompt treatment with quality-assured drugs and treatment regimens.
2. Engaging with the patients seeking care in the private sector.
3. Prevention strategies include contact tracing in high-risk/vulnerable populations.
4. Airborne infection control.
5. Multi-sectoral response for addressing social determinants.

Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan

To give a mission mode approach to the fight against TB, the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan was launched in September 2022. The objective was to design activities and interventions to ensure how to meet the SDG target regarding



TB by 2025. This required a community level engagement where various agencies, communities and the governments would work together in tandem. The initiative brought together people from all backgrounds into a 'Jan Andolan' and escalated the progress toward TB elimination. This also leveraged Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

A novel initiative of Ni-kshay Mitras was started, where volunteers from various walks of society would become 'Mitras' (friends) in helping TB patients in their journey of recovery. Involvement of the community in the TB elimination campaign aims to alleviate the stigma related to the disease. Community engagement also will result in more awareness about the disease and ways to prevent it and manage it better. The disease itself and the long duration treatment has resulted in loss of jobs for many and economic hardships. Ni-kshay Mitras also pledge to extending vocational support for the TB patients.

Till April 2024, more than 1.55 lakh Ni-kshay Mitra have registered. Of the 13.45 lakh TB patients on treatment in the country, over 8.66 lakh have consented to receive community support.

Active Case Finding Campaign

Several other measures have strongly boosted the anti-TB drive in India. Studies (Ho J. et al., 2016) have shown that TB case detection through passive case finding (PCF) could result in suboptimal detection of TB patients. The tendency is more so in low- and middle-income countries having a high TB burden. This is mainly due to geographic and/or socioeconomic barriers in accessing health facilities, which also often leads to diagnostic delays.

A 'systematic screening' of high-risk population subgroups has been advocated as part of the 'End TB Strategy' by the WHO to increase TB case detection and for timely treatment.

India launched the national community-based active case finding campaign in high-risk groups as part of the strategic plan of the NTEP for reaching out to missing TB patients. Under this programme, proactive house-to-house searches of TB cases among the vulnerable populations is conducted. This includes people living with HIV, diabetics, undernourished, residential institutes like prisons, asylums, old age homes, orphanages, tribal areas

1 lakh + Ni-Kshay Mitras
have provided additional nutritional support to
10 lakh + Persons with TB

Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan, the world's largest crowd-sourcing initiative to support Persons with TB, will help in achieving the TB Mukht Bharat goal.

Become a Ni-Kshay Mitra and support the fight against TB.
Scan to register now!

Ni-Kshay Sampark: 1800-11-6666

TB Harega Desh Jeetega

and marginalised populations. This activity has resulted in the diagnosis of an additional nearly 3 lakh TB cases since its inception.

TB screenings during Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra was started during November 2023. As part of this nationwide program, health camps were organised on routes taken by the awareness enhancement IEC Vans in states/UTs where several health services were provided for the communities near their homes at the village level, including screening for TB.



Over 38 million individuals have been screened for TB at these health camps and over 1 million referrals have been made for TB testing. Additionally, over 1,00,000 individuals at the village level showed interest in becoming a Ni-kshay Mitra.

Remarkable upswing in TB Notifications

The specialised active case finding drives, combined with scaling up of molecular diagnostics up to the block levels, decentralised screening services through Ayushman Bharat Arogya Mandirs (earlier known as Health & Wellness Centres, which number more than 1.64 lakh across the country) and private sector engagement have significantly boosted the process to bridge the gap in missing cases. These kendras serve as the first point of contact for screening of TB.

TB Mukh Panchayat Abhiyan

The objective of TB Mukh Panchayats is to empower the Panchayats to realise the extent and magnitude of the problems associated with Tuberculosis, take necessary actions towards solving them and create healthy competition amongst panchayats and to appreciate their contribution.

As a part of capacity building, several regional workshops have been organised to orient state & district level officials on this initiative. All State and district level functionaries have been sensitised. Currently, verification is being undertaken and results will be announced subsequently. As on date, this has helped to secure of over 5 million

courses of TB preventive treatment drug. This has also encouraged the villagers to get themselves screened for TB at the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

A marked jump witnessed in private sector notification

With a focused and targeted engagement with the private sector through interventions like Patient Provider Support Agency (PPSA), gazette notification for mandatory notification of TB cases, incentives for notification of cases and collaborations with professional bodies like Indian Medical Association (IMA), Indian Association of Paediatrics (IAP), Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI), etc., there has been an increase in private sector notification by more than 8 times over the past nine years. In 2022, 7.33 lakh TB cases were notified whereas in 2023, 8.42 lakh patients were notified from the private sector which contributed to 33% (highest ever) of total notifications (as in Feb 2024). The programmatic collaborative efforts resulted in an 8 times increase in cases reported from the private sector. These innovative private sector models have been global best practices.

Increase in TB treatment success rate

Over the last nine years, despite one-third of notifications coming from the private sector, the programme was able to sustain a treatment success rate of above 80%. In 2021, the success rate had reached 84% and in 2022, it marginally increased to 85.5%. In 2023, the success rate increased to 86.9%.

Introduction of newer anti-TB drugs has made a significant impact

Shorter, safer oral Bedaquiline-containing DR-TB regimens have been rolled out across all states and UTs. These drugs are given to multi-drug-resistant TB patients with or without resistance to fluoroquinolones as a part of shorter oral MDR/RR (multidrug-resistant/(rifampicin-resistant) - TB regimen or longer oral M (multidrug-resistant)/XDR (Extensively drug-resistant)-TB regimen as per the indication. In 2022, a total of nearly 31,000 patients were initiated on the longer all-oral M/XDR-TB regimen and 27,431 patients were initiated on the shorter MDR/RR-TB regimen (oral/injection based).

In 2023, over 63,939 patients were diagnosed with MDR/RR and out of them a little more than

58,527 initiated on treatment. Amongst these, nearly 20,567 patients were initiated on shorter oral MDR/RR-TB regimen (9-11 months) and close to 29,990 patients were initiated on longer M/XDR-TB regimen (18-20 months).

Nutritional support through Nikshay Poshan Yojana

According to WHO report (2017), people with active TB who suffer from undernutrition usually are linked to a two- to four-fold increase in mortality. There is also a five-fold risk of drug-induced hepatotoxicity.

In view of this potent co-relation, the Government introduced a scheme of Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) in April 2018 for providing Rs. 500/month as direct benefit transfer (DBT) to support the nutrition of TB patients for the entire duration of treatment. Till date, more than 1 crore TB patients have benefitted. Cumulatively, till March 2024, more than Rs. 2,859.96 crore have been disbursed.

Infrastructure Scale-Up

Diagnostic infrastructure has played a vital role in active TB case detection. Through concerted efforts, there has been a notable infrastructure scale-up of TB laboratory services. Designated Microscopy Centres (DMCs) have increased by 80% (13,583 in 2014 to 24,449 in 2023) over the past 9 years. Also, 6,196 new molecular diagnostic laboratories have been established till now. The number of drug-resistant TB treatment centres has increased from 127 in 2014 to 792 in 2022.

Sub National disease-free certification

In order to monitor the trends of the TB epidemic at the State/UTs/District level, the Health Ministry has introduced a novel initiative of estimating disease burden through a methodology of community-level survey (Inverse sampling methodology) and tracking drug sales data in the private sector and measuring the level of under-reporting to the programme.

Through this methodology, State/UTs/District level estimates of TB disease are derived and measured against the baseline of 2015. In the year 2020, Lakshadweep and Budgam in J&K were declared as the first UT & the first district in the country respectively to achieve more than 80%

reduction in TB incidence. In 2022, Karnataka received Silver (>40% reduction) and Jammu & Kashmir received Bronze (>20% reduction). Three districts were declared TB-free (>80% reduction), 17 districts received Gold (>60% reduction), 35 districts received Silver and 48 districts received Bronze.

High Level focus during G20 India Presidency

Apart from these steps, under the G20 India Presidency in 2023, the Union Health Ministry has diligently advocated and addressed selected concerns of global importance, which included improving the effectiveness and reach of health services using digital solutions; strengthening cooperation to enhance pharmaceutical development and manufacturing capabilities. There was a sharp focus on "One Health" approach and Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) during the deliberations in the Health Working Groups and the Ministerial meeting at Gandhinagar, Gujarat in November 2023. All of these have had strong resonance with India's and the world's fight against TB.

Conclusion

With less than two years for India to meet its target of being TB Free by 2025, the approach going forward is to focus on prevention of the disease and to saturate coverage of services in the detection and treatment of TB. It is encouraging to note that with continuous efforts of the governments, support agencies and the communities, the number of missing TB cases in India has reduced from 1 million in 2015 to 0.26 million in 2023.

India's efforts are important, as the PM mentioned, this is a "new model for the global war on TB". India's big strides in combating TB have won global accolades. Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director of Stop TB Partnership, praised India's scale in tackling TB and the TB-Free India initiative. She expressed the belief that India will end TB by 2025, and this will make a huge dent in the global TB burden. □

(Views are personal)

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India's Strategic Engagement in the South China Sea

The South China Sea (SCS) is a marginal sea of about 800,000 square kilometers in the western Pacific Ocean enclosed by various Asian states mainly China, Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam. It is also the cynosure of one of Asia's long-standing geopolitical contentions, namely the SCS dispute. The presence of an estimated 3.6 billion barrels of petroleum and other liquids and 40.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves are the original bone of contention among the developing littoral states of the SCS. This area is connected to the world by important trade entryways like the Strait of Malacca which sees an upwards of \$3 trillion worth of trade pass through each year.

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s India's influence and share of the global stage gains prominence a number of its policies and approaches stand revised accordingly. Globally but more so in Asia, India's continuous commitment to the ideals of democracy and harmonious coexistence and non-interference has achieved it the acknowledgment and support of many of its neighbours. As of April 2024, India is the fifth largest economy in the world, with a GDP of \$3.9 trillion (nominal), putting it right behind the economies of developed nations like the US, Germany, and Japan (IMF, 2024).

India has been intensifying its Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with both sides working to implement the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025) and develop a new plan for 2026-2030. (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2018). Countries like Indonesia and Vietnam have viewed

India's influence in the region more favorably, reflecting the strengthening of India's strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asian nations (Aswani et al., 2021).

India is often regarded as a preferred strategic partner compared to other accomplished counterparts in the region, such as China. This preference is highlighted even more in the South China Sea (SCS) dispute. Up until recently, India had maintained a cautious and balanced approach in line with its non-interference ideals. However, due to China's aggressive pursuits in the SCS disputes, India has shifted from its previously neutral stance to one that expresses support for and alignment with the freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes as per international law.

While India does not have any direct territorial claims in the region, it has sought to enhance strategic partnerships with countries in the

region to promote stability and security. Despite this, India has refrained from taking an overtly confrontational stance towards China, opting instead to maintain diplomatic channels for dialogue and cooperation and supporting its allies via dialogues, diplomacy and military agreements.

India's Strategic Interests in the SCS

The SCS holds significant strategic importance for India due to its economic, security, and geopolitical interests. Economically, the SCS is a vital maritime trade route, with a considerable portion of global trade passing through its waters. For India, the Malacca Strait, which connects the Indian Ocean to the SCS, is particularly crucial as it is a major artery for Indian trade with East Asia. As per Bhatt's (2023) conclusive findings, "over 80 percent of India's trade is dependent upon sea lines of communication ... India finds strong market and trade synergies with Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN as much as it does with China."

Ensuring the freedom of navigation and overflight in the SCS is thus essential for India's economic prosperity and energy security. India's Act East Policy, aimed at enhancing economic and strategic ties with East Asian countries, further underscores the strategic importance of the SCS. As part of this policy, India has been strengthening its engagement with countries in the region, including Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia, all of which have territorial disputes with China in the SCS. These partnerships aim to enhance maritime security, promote economic cooperation, and counter Chinese dominance in the region.

India's deepening defence and economic ties with these countries pave the way for further enhancing India's strategic presence in the region. Any disruption in the region could have far-reaching consequences for India's security and maritime interests. India has therefore been advocating for a rules-based order in the region, based on the principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The escalating tensions and militarisation in the SCS by China have raised concerns about the potential for conflict and disruption of maritime trade. The fragility of the geopolitical structure in the

SCS threatens the strategic and economic stability that India has nurtured with neighbouring states over decades and so the change of policies in the SCS dispute comes at a crucial turning point time.

As a major regional power, India's evolving stance on the SCS reflects its growing role and influence in shaping the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region.

Balancing Act: India's Approach to the South China Sea Dispute

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in outlining India's foreign policy visions, aims, and objectives, has emphasized several key principles that guide India's approach to international relations, especially the SCS dispute. These principles are particularly relevant in the context of the South China Sea (SCS) disputes, where India's stance is shaped by its strategic interests and long-term objectives.

One of the central tenets of India's foreign policy is the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy. India seeks to maintain its independence and flexibility in foreign relations, avoiding entanglements in power blocs and alliances. This approach is evident in India's cautious and balanced stance on the SCS disputes, where it seeks to uphold the principles of international law while avoiding direct confrontation with China.

But at the same time, India also advocates for a pragmatic approach in its foreign policy, focusing on India's national interests and leveraging global contradictions to secure strategic advantages. In the context of the SCS, this pragmatic approach guides India's efforts to strengthen its strategic partnerships with countries in the region, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, to counterbalance China's growing influence and establish a rule-based environment that is conducive for regional stability and multilevel cooperation.

Another key objective of India's foreign policy, as highlighted by Jaishankar, is the promotion of a rules-based international order. India believes that upholding international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), is crucial for promoting stability and security in the SCS region. India's support for a rules-based approach to the SCS disputes reflects its commitment to this principle.

Conclusion

India's strategic interest and presence in the SCS reflects a multifaceted approach driven by economic, security, and geopolitical imperatives. The region's significance as a vital maritime trade route, coupled with India's expanding economic ties with ASEAN and East Asia, underscores the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific for India's foreign policy objectives. India's Act East Policy acts as an important enduring link for promoting economic integration thus strengthening security cooperation in the region. The evolving dynamics in the SCS, marked by territorial disputes and great power competition, have tapped India's proactive engagement to safeguard its economic interests and contribute to flourishing regional stability. While India's presence in the SCS is not aimed at confrontation with China, it is a testimony of India's commitment to upholding international maritime law and ensuring freedom of navigation in the area. The recent oil and gas exploration agreement with Vietnam and the focus on joint maritime activities with like-minded partners highlight India's strategic imperative to secure its

maritime interests and contribute to a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Moving forward, India's continued engagement in the SCS will be guided by the principles of inclusivity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and commitment to a fair and open maritime order, aligning with its broader vision of promoting regional security and economic prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. □

(Views are personal)

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UNION BUDGET 2024-25

AT A GLANCE

Despite the global economy remaining under the grip of policy uncertainties, India's economic growth continues to be the shining exception and will remain so in the years ahead. For pursuit of 'Viksit Bharat', the budget envisages sustained efforts on 9 priorities for generating ample opportunities for all, focusing on employment, skilling, MSMEs, and the middle-class. These priorities are productivity and resilience in agriculture, employment and skilling, inclusive human resource development and social justice, manufacturing and services, urban development, energy security, infrastructure, innovation, research and development and next generation reforms.

A slew of measures to give a boost to agriculture, MSMEs, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. Poor, women, youth and farmers are the key focus areas for the government. Under the Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skilling, three schemes were announced for employment-linked incentives. Under Scheme A, one month's wage for all persons newly entering the workforce in all formal sectors will be provided. Scheme B will



Inclusive Human Resource Development and Social Justice

- Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefitting women and girls
- More than 100 branches of India Post Payment Bank to be set up in the North Eastern Region
- Completion of Polavaram Irrigation Project to ensure food security of the nation
- Funds to be provided for essential infrastructure development in Koppurthy node on Vishakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor & Orvakal node on Hyderabad-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor

lead to job creation in manufacturing, and Scheme C will provide support to employers. Significant investments have been made to build robust infrastructure, and over 11 lakh crore rupees for capital expenditure have been allocated to boost the infrastructure in the country. Over three lakh crore for schemes benefitting women and girls was also announced by the Finance Minister.

The Minister also announced that Mudra Loans will be enhanced to 20 lakh from the current 10 lakh for those entrepreneurs who have availed of and successfully paid loans under the Tarun category. She said the e-commerce export hub will be set in PPP mode. The Minister announced that the government will launch a comprehensive scheme for providing internship opportunities in 500 top companies to one crore youth in five years. Rental housing with dormitory-type accommodation for industrial workers will be facilitated in PPP mode.

The Minister said, the government will set up a critical mineral mission for domestic production and recycling of critical minerals. She said, transit-oriented development plans for 14 large cities with populations over 30 lakhs will be formulated. She announced the PM Awas Yojana (Urban) 2.0, housing needs of



Budget Priorities
Path of strong development and all-round prosperity

Productivity and resilience in Agriculture	Employment & Skilling	Inclusive Human Resource Development and Social Justice
Manufacturing & Services	Urban Development	Energy Security
Infrastructure	Innovation, Research & Development	Next Generation Reforms

Next-Gen Reforms

- Technology to speed up digitalization of economy
- Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to improve Ease of Doing Business
- States to be incentivized to implement Business Reforms Action Plans and digitalization
- Sectoral databases for improving data governance and management
- Committee to review New Pension Scheme to evolve solution which addresses relevant issues while maintaining fiscal prudence

one crore poor and middle-class families will be addressed with 10 lakh crore rupees. She said, the fourth phase of the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana will be launched. She also said the NPS (Vatsalya) scheme for economic security of minors will be launched.

The Finance Minister also announced the exemption of three more medicines from customs duties to provide relief to cancer patients. It was also announced to reduce customs duties on gold and silver to 6 per cent and those on platinum to 6.4 per cent. She also proposed to increase the limit on the exemption of capital gains on certain financial assets to 1.25 lakh rupees per year. To bolster the Indian startup system, she proposed to abolish the angel tax for all classes of investors.

Two major announcements were made by the Finance Minister regarding Personal Income Tax. The standard deduction for salaried employees under the New Tax Regime will be increased from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000 and the New Tax Regime slab

UNION BUDGET 2024-25
भारत सरकार
MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Tax Relief and Revised Tax Slabs in New Tax Regime

Income Slab	Rate
0-3 lakh rupees	Nil
3-7 lakh rupees	5 per cent
7-10 lakh rupees	10 per cent
10-12 lakh rupees	15 per cent
12-15 lakh rupees	20 per cent
Above 15 lakh rupees	30 per cent

- Income tax saving of up to ₹ 17,500/- for salaried employee in new tax regime

Income Tax Relief for around Four Crore Salaried Individuals and Pensioners

- Standard deduction for salaried employees to be increased from ₹ 50,000/- to ₹ 75,000/-
- Deduction on family pension for pensioners to be increased from ₹ 15,000/- to ₹ 25,000/-

rates have been revised. These changes aim to provide tax relief and simplify the tax structure for individuals.

Source: PIB & AIR News

With a comprehensive analysis of the impact of budget announcements on various sectors and an in-depth study of the nine key priority areas, the September issue of **Yojana** on **Union Budget 2024-25** is a must-read!