

STORIES

Unsung Heroes of India's Freedom Struggle

Jhalkari Bai (1830–1858)

Place: Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh

When we talk of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, another name comes to the fore – who was as brave as her, and whose story is equally inspiring. She was – **Jhalkari Bai**.

She was born in a Dalit Koli family near Jhansi. From childhood, she was not like ordinary girls – along with working in the fields, she learnt sword fighting, horse riding and shooting. It is said that she once fought a tiger single-handedly.



The queen of Jhansi Rani Laxmibai had decided to fight the British. Her courage and valour demands respect. Along with her regular army, Rani Laxmibai formed an army of women — **Durga Dal** — Jhalkari Bai joined it. Seeing her courage and leadership, the queen started considering her as her confidant.

In 1857, Jhansi was surrounded by the British. It was necessary to take the queen out of the fort so that she could join the rest of the forces.

Then Jhalkari Bai made a unique plan. She looked exactly like the queen. She wore the queen's clothes, wore her jewelry, and went in front of the army and introduced herself as the queen and distracted the British.

The British thought - '**We captured the queen!**' Meanwhile, the real queen escaped safely.

When the British discovered the truth, they were shocked. Jhalkari Bai was either executed, or according to some accounts, she escaped and later lived a long life.

Lesson: Jhalkari Bai teaches us that bravery is not dependent on caste or gender. She changed history by putting her life at stake. Whenever you feel scared, or think "what can I do alone?" - remember the story of Jhalkari Bai.

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Uda Devi Pasi - Dalit Daughter, Brave Martyr

Place: Awadh, Uttar Pradesh

It was 1857. Anger was at its peak in North India. Fed up with the injustice and atrocities of the British, rebellions were taking place everywhere. Some kings and some nawabs were entering the fray. But there was one name in this revolution, who was neither from a royal family nor from a rich family - rather she was from a poor Dalit farmer family. Her name was - Uda Devi Pasi.

When the British removed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh and occupied Lucknow, his wife Begum Hazrat Mahal took over the leadership. Uda Devi also joined this movement for the independence of the country. She became a part of the Begum's women army. But she was not just a soldier - **she was a leader and a fierce warrior in her own right.**

When Uda's husband Makka Pasi was martyred fighting the British, Uda Devi vowed - "**I will chase these foreigners away from our Awadh.**"

When the British army advanced to capture Lucknow, Uda Devi made a plan. She climbed a big peepal tree, carrying a gun with her. As soon as British soldiers came close, Uda Devi, sitting on the tree would shoot at them. In no time, **Uda Devi killed about eight to ten British soldiers!**

The British couldn't stop wondering who was this Indian soldier killing their soldiers? Eventually, they came to know that someone is shooting their men from the peepal tree. The British officer ordered his men to climb the tree and arrest this man. When the soldiers started going near the tree, Uda Devi **shot herself so that she could not be caught alive by the British.** The British were shocked to know that the Indian soldier who killed their men was a woman! They had never seen such act of bravery by any soldier before!

Lesson: Uda Devi Pasi's story teaches us that courage is never linked to caste or gender. Women are not just meant to take care of the household - they can also pick up a gun, if needed. The passion to die for the country can be in everyone's heart. If people like Uda Devi can risk their lives, then we can at least raise our voice for our rights and our country.



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Matangini Hazra

the Grandmother who took Bullets holding the Tricolor

Place: Midnapore, West Bengal

This is the story of an elderly woman who was neither a soldier nor a leader... but she had great **passion for freedom**. Her name was — **Matangi Hazra**.

Matangini was born in 1870 in a small village in Bengal. Poverty and struggle were her companions since childhood. Marriage at a young age, then her husband's death soon after... but these sorrows did not break her, but made her stronger!



Matangini Hazra jumped into the freedom struggle at the age of 60, when Gandhiji started the 'Salt Satyagraha' against the British. She went from village to village and started connecting people to the freedom struggle. For doing this, the British sent her to jail. But this did not stop her from participating in the freedom struggle. She continued to organize people to fight against the British.

The Quit India Movement in 1942. Matangini was now 72 years old, but still young at heart. One day, along with 6000 people of the village, she marched towards a Police Chowki in Midnapore carrying the Tricolour. The objective was to remove the Union Jack and hoist the Tricolour.

The British soldiers got scared – and started firing. Everyone retreated, but Matangini did not stop. **3 bullets hit her body!** But the tricolour kept fluttering in her hand until she fell.

Even in her last breath there was only one word – "Vande Mataram!"

Lesson: Matangini Hazra teaches us that **patriotism doesn't depend on age**. If there is courage and true intention in the heart, then **even a single old woman can shake the roots of an empire**. There are **thousands of unsung heroes like Matangini**. We are indebted for our freedom to such heroes.

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Durgabai Deshmukh: Young Age, Big Dream

Place: Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

Long ago, in a city called Rajmundri in Andhra Pradesh, a lovely girl was born in 1909. Her name was **Durgabai Deshmukh**. She did not come from a rich family - her father and mother were from an ordinary family. But Durgabai had big dreams.

At the age of 10, when children play with toys, **Durgabai** had started a school for the women in Kakinada city. Here, she taught Hindi alongwith her mother to more than 500 women from the nearby villages, so that they could join the freedom struggle.

One day, **Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi** came to this school. After seeing the courage and hard work of such a small girl, he said - "*She is a true patriot!*" Gandihji told her about the swadeshi movement. From that day onwards **Durgabai started wearing khadi** to boycott the foreign clothes.

Here's another daring anecdote. Durgabai got married at the **age of 8 years**. But when she grew up, she decided to **leave her husband to complete her studies**. She completed her BA & MA and went on to become a Lawyer at Madras (present day Chennai).

But becoming a lawyer wasn't just her dream — her dream was **servicing the country**. She actively took part in the **Salt Satyagraha & Quit India Movement** and was **jailed several times**.

After independence, she founded the '**Andhra Mahila Sabha**', which continues to run schools, hospitals, and orphanages to this day. She became a **member of the Constituent Assembly** and raised her voice **against child marriage, dowry, and the purdah system**.

For her work, she was honored with the *Padma Vibhushan* in 1975.

Lesson: Durgabai teaches us that if one's determination is strong, any girl — no matter how young — can bring about great change. Through education, courage, and hard work, she can change the course of the nation. Durgabai's story is an inspiration for every child.



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Mallu Akka

Place: Warangal, Andhra Pradesh

Many years ago, in a small village in Andhra Pradesh, there lived a girl named Mallu. Her father was a farmer, but the exploitation by landlords had made life very difficult for the family. From childhood, Mallu had seen how poor farmers were forced to pay heavy taxes and how those who protested were beaten.

At just 11 years old, she raised slogans against the British government and the landlords. By

the time she was 13, she had joined the

Telangana Movement. Gradually, Mallu Akka became a leader in the struggle for people's rights — attending secret meetings, spreading awareness, and, **when necessary, even picking up a gun.**

Once, Mallu and her companions took grain from a landlord's house and distributed it among the poor. When some people called it theft, Mallu replied: **“The British and landlords loot everything from us. We take it away from them and distribute it among the poor and hungry. How can this be theft?”**

When Mallu was 15, she was arrested. But **even in prison, she did not give up.** She began teaching the inmates and encouraging them. Later, Mallu Akka became a member of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. She always said — **“I am not a leader, I am a companion of the people.”**

Lesson: Whether young or old, it is important to raise your voice against injustice. Courage, truth, and the spirit of living for others are the real strength. To bring change, you don't need a high position — you need a big heart and strong determination.

