

# STORIES

## Unsung Heroes of India's Freedom Struggle

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### Begum Hazrat Mahal - A Queen Who Never Bowed

*Place: Ludhiana, Punjab*

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine — the year is 1857, and there is unrest all around. People of India have risen to drive away the British. In Jhansi, Lakshmibai stands in the battlefield with her sword, and on the other side — in Lucknow — another queen stands tall and unyielding. Her name is **Begum Hazrat Mahal**.



The British had deposed her husband, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, and sent him away to Calcutta. At such a time, Begum Hazrat Mahal decided to fight.

She declared her young son — only 11 years old at the time — the ruler of Lucknow, and **herself became the commander of the army**. She united the common people of Lucknow, trained soldiers, and confronted the British head-on. Her leadership was so powerful that, **for a while, the British were forced to abandon Lucknow**.

But the British returned with a larger army and shrewd diplomacy. They attacked Lucknow once again. Did Begum lose courage? No! Riding on horseback, sword in hand, she went from village to village, boosting the morale of the people. She brought Hindus & Muslims together to fight as one.

When the British's final assault destroyed everything, she moved to Nepal and took refuge there — but she never sought the British's pardon, never begged to be reinstated as queen, and never betrayed her country.

**Lesson:** True leadership stands firm even in the face of crisis. A woman can lead an army and fight the British. Patriotism means never giving up the fight for your country, no matter how dire the situation.

Today, as we breathe freely in open air, we must remember that our independence was won not only through the sacrifices of men, but also through the equal courage and contributions of brave women.

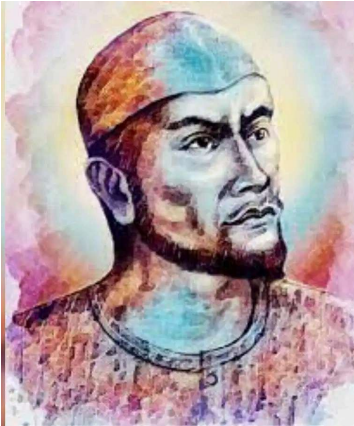
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### Peer Ali Khan: The Revolutionary Bookseller

*Place: Patna, Bihar*



Many years ago, there lived a brave bookseller — Peer Ali Khan. He sold books, but in his heart burned the flame of freedom.

Born in 1812 in Patna, Peer Ali Khan was a trader and ran a small bookshop. Outwardly, he appeared to be an ordinary man, but within, he was like a volcano — ready to erupt against British injustice.

In 1857, when the wave of rebellion swept across the country — what we now call the ***First War of Independence*** — Peer Ali Khan began uniting people against the British. He **delivered secret messages, spread awareness among the people, and planned revolutionary activities**. He was a close associate of Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah of Faizabad and had built a strong network of revolutionaries from Bihar to North India.

But the British grew suspicious. They raided his shop in Patna and found revolutionary pamphlets, letters, and plans. Peer Ali was arrested and charged with treason.

When presented in court, he fearlessly declared: ***“I have worked for India’s independence. It was my duty — not a crime.”***

On July 18, 1857, he was executed by hanging in front of the public in Patna. This was done to instill fear in the people. But instead, his death sparked even more uprisings in Patna. Today, his name might not appear in history books — but in the story of India’s freedom struggle, Peer Ali Khan remains immortal.

**Lesson:** His courage teaches us that if one’s heart holds bravery and love for the country, even an ordinary bookseller can change the course of history.

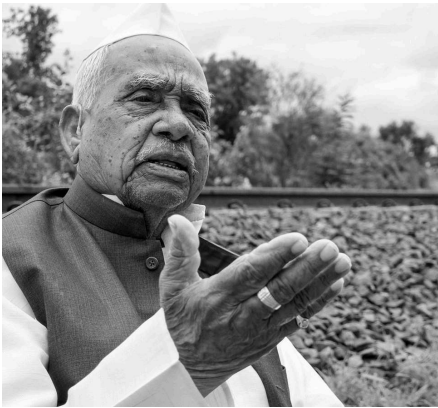
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### Captain Bhau and the Toofan Sena

*Place: Satara, Maharashtra*



Many years ago, when India was under British rule, the British were looting our country's wealth, and anyone who dared to oppose them was thrown into jail.

But there was one place — Satara — where some brave people refused to remain silent. There, a secret government was formed, called the ***Prati Sarkar*** (parallel government). This government worked underground, helped the poor, and outwitted the British.

In this government, there was a courageous young man named Ramchandra Shripati Lad, lovingly called *Captain Bhau*. Captain Bhau was no ordinary leader. He organised a group of children and teenagers, which he named the ***Toofan Sena*** (Storm Army). This army consisted of boys and girls aged 10 to 16, who fearlessly worked against the British — delivering letters, passing secret messages to warn people, and, when needed, even transporting weapons. The Toofan Sena didn't only have children — teenagers, young adults, and even a few elderly people were also part of it.

One night, on June 7, 1943, Bhau and his companions stopped a train at the Shenoli railway station. That train was carrying British treasure and important goods. Bhau and his team took out the money, and handed it over to the *Prati Sarkar*. This money was used for schools, grains and supporting revolutionaries.

When someone asked him, "*Why did you steal?*" Bhau laughed and replied: "***We did not steal. The British have been looting us for years. We only took a little back for our own people — why call that stealing?***"

Captain Bhau had a big heart. He never let fear come near him. Even after India's independence, he continued to serve society. He lived to be 100 years old and bid farewell to the world in 2022.

**Lesson:** There is no age limit to serving your country. No weapon is greater than truth and courage. In difficult times, even small children can become heroes! Thanks to people like Captain Bhau, we can breathe freely today. His Toofan Sena may have been made up of children, but their deeds were greater than those of many adults.

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### Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi

*Place: Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh*

This is the story of a hero who fought neither with a sword nor with a gun — yet whose courage is remembered as an example for all. His name was **Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi** — a warrior who made the pen his weapon and fought for truth and humanity.

Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was born in 1890 in the Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh. Bright in studies, clear in thought, and with a heart burning with love for the country, he turned to journalism at a very young age and soon started a newspaper called ***Pratap***.



Through this paper, he raised his voice against British atrocities, the plight of farmers, and social injustice. The British could not tolerate this and imprisoned him several times, but Vidyarthi never gave up.

He was not just a journalist, but also a true social worker.

To weaken the freedom movement, the British followed their “**divide and rule**” policy. They deliberately incited clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities. In 1931, terrible riots broke out in Kanpur. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi himself took to the streets to stop the violence. **Though he was a Hindu, he saved the lives of many Muslims.**

In this effort, **he was killed by a mob** and became a martyr.

His sacrifice proved that a true patriot is one who works to unite people — even if it means giving up his own life.

**Lesson:** Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi's story teaches us that to bring about social change, slogans alone are not enough — sacrifice is also necessary. People like him will always remain alive in our hearts, like lamps that light the way even in the darkest times.