

STORIES

Unsung Heroes of India's Freedom Struggle

Birsa Munda (1875–1900)

Place: Chota Nagpur, Jharkhand



Ever heard of a young man who shook the British before the age of 25? One such name is - **Birsa Munda!**

Birsa Munda was born in a small village in Jharkhand, in a tribal Munda family. His childhood was spent in forests, mountains and fields. But when the British started seizing the lands of the tribals, and the landlords started exploiting them, Birsa opposed it.

He used to say - “**We want our own rule – *Abua Disum, Abua Raj.***” (*our country, our government*)

Birsa studied in a British school, but soon realized that the British were erasing the culture of the tribals in the name of religion and education. He left the school and started uniting the tribal youth.

One day an English officer came to the village and started collecting rent forcibly from the farmers. Birsa stopped the officer and said, “**This land is not yours. These forests, these fields, are our mothers. We will not let them be sold.**”

Gradually Birsa Munda organized thousands of tribals. He started a movement against the British government - which was called '***Ulgulan***' - meaning '**great rebellion**'.

The British arrested him and he died a mysterious death in jail in 1900 – at the age of just 25. Even today he is worshipped as '***Dharti Aaba***' i.e **father of the earth**.

Lesson: Birsa Munda teaches us that to fight for what is right, courage and truth are needed. Age is not important. If we want to save our culture, environment and society today, then we need to become like Birsa.

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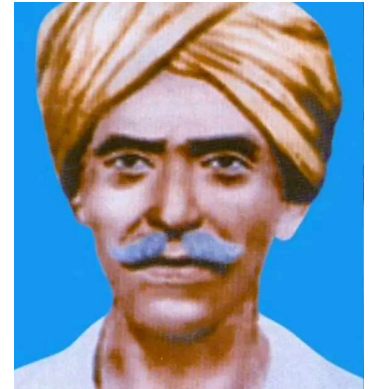
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Komaram Bhima (1901–1940)

Place: Adilabad, Telangana

Do you know who first gave the famous slogan - *Jal Jungle Zameen*? It was one of our tribal heroes - **Komaram Bheem**.

He belonged to the Gond tribe and lived in the forests of Telangana. Hyderabad was then ruled by the Nizam – an ally of the British. The Nizam's police forcibly collected taxes from the tribals, confiscated their lands, and prevented them from even cutting wood or farming in the forests.



One day Komaram Bheem's father was killed by the police. Then Komaram Bheem decided that he would not tolerate injustice.

He said - "**We have no king, no wealth — we just have forests, water, land — and they are our life. We cannot leave them!**"

He went to the jungles and started training in guerrilla warfare. He went to the villages and organized people and clashed with the Nizam's army.

Once, the police came to the village and started scaring the children. Komaram Bheem came forward and said - "**If you want the land, you'll have to cross me first.**" He came out from behind a tree and attacked the police.

In the 1930s, his movement became so strong that the Nizam had to send in the army. He was martyred in a battle in 1940. Today, there are colleges and memorials and a district named after him in Telangana.

Lesson: Komaram Bheem teaches us that as long as we protect 'water, forest, land', our existence will remain intact. Raising a voice for environment and rights is also a service to the nation.

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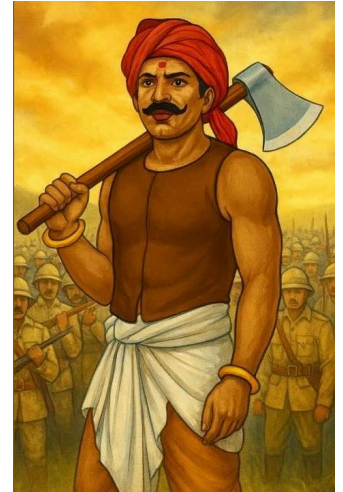
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Ramji Gond (active period: c. 1857–1860)

Place: Adilabad region, Telangana

Today we will talk about a tribal hero, whose name may not be found in the thick books of history - but the echo of whose courage is still heard in the tribal areas. He is - **Ramji Gond**.

He was from a Gond tribal community in the Adilabad area of South India. At that time, for the first time in India, there was a big rebellion against the British - which is called the 'Revolution of 1857'. This rebellion took place in every corner of the country. Ramji Gond saw that the British were taking away the lands of the tribals, occupying the forests, and imposing direct rule by removing the local kings.



Ramji Gond organized the youth of his area. They lived like farmers during the day and **at night they raided British camps, cavalry units and tax officers**. The British were troubled by their guerrilla attacks.

One night a group of British soldiers were camped outside a village. Ramji Gond came to know about this. He told his companions - "**Fighting in the dark is our strength. The forest is our mother, and no enemy can withstand us in the shadow of our mother.**"

That night they surrounded the British from all sides, extinguished the torches and suddenly attacked from behind the trees. The British were defeated before they could understand anything.

When the British could not defeat Ramji Gond in a direct war, they played a trick. On the pretext of a fake agreement, they called Ramji Gond for talks and arrested him. According to some folklore, after killing him, his head was hung on a pole so that fear would spread among the rest of tribals.

But just the opposite happened – **not fear, but inspiration spread**. Today, Ramji Gond is remembered as a 'brave warrior' in many villages of Telangana and Central India. His statues and memorials in many districts are still inspiring children.

Lesson: It is a sin to remain silent when our home, land, and people are in danger. Even a small group of determined people with limited resources can bring about big change.

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Veer Tirot Singh: The Fearless Warrior of Mountains

Place: Khasi community, Meghalaya

A long time ago, there was a small kingdom in the beautiful hills of Meghalaya - the **Khasi tribal lands**. Their chief was **Tirot Singh** — courageous, intelligent, and deeply loved by his people.

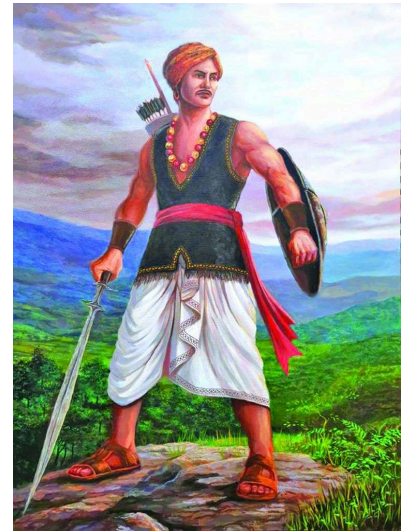
The Khasi people lived happily with their forests, mountains and rivers. But one day, the British arrived. They wanted to build a road there. They promised Tirot Singh that they would not harm the land of the Khasi people. But the British, as always, lied. They slowly started grabbing the land on which the Khasi people had been living for generations.

Tirot Singh did not accept this at all. He said - "**This is the land of our ancestors, no one can take it away from us!**"

The British had cannons and guns, and the Khasi people had only bows and arrows and spears. But cannons or guns cannot do much against the courage of self-respecting people! Tirot Singh taught his army guerrilla warfare, the art of attacking stealthily - like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj used to do in Maharashtra. He defeated the British many times by hiding in the forests.

The British kept losing for four years! But then, someone betrayed Tirot Singh. He was wounded and captured in 1833. The British sent him to a far-off prison in Dhaka, where he breathed his last in 1835.

Lesson: Tirot Singh never gave up. He did not have a large army, but he had courage, passion to fight for the truth, and love for his loved ones. He taught us that "**It is never wrong to fight for land, freedom and self-respect!**"



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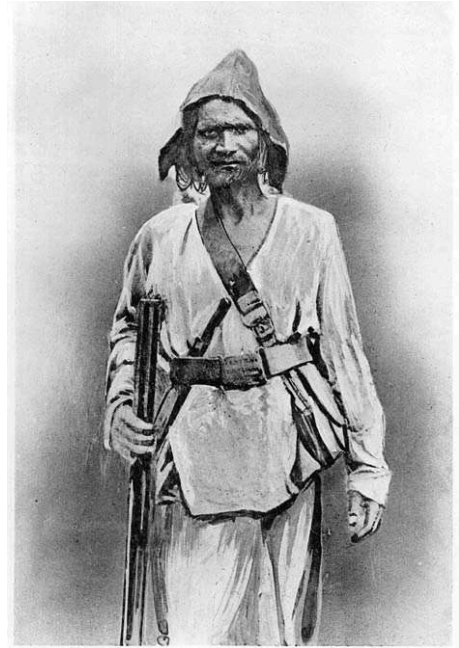
Unsung Heroes of India's Freedom Struggle

Tantya Bhil - Robin Hood of the Tribals

Place: Khandva, Madhya Pradesh

Tantya Bhil, fondly known as "**Tantya Mama**" was born around 1840 in the Khandwa area of Madhya Pradesh. Since childhood, he knew how to use lathi, arrows and slingshot.

The great rebellion of 1857, British oppression and the plight of the farmers sowed the seeds of rebellion in young Tantya's heart. He organized the local tribals and started looting the British either alone or in groups. But he was not a dacoit. **The money which he looted from the British and their allies, would be distributed among the poor.** For this honest affection and sense of justice, he became a hero of the tribals and the common people.



Tantya was an expert in the tactics of guerrilla warfare. He would attack suddenly and disappear using the forests and roads. He could not be caught! The British created a special force to arrest him, but **Tantya kept escaping from them for 15 years!**

Then, the British played a trick – when he was visiting his sister's house on the day of Rakhi, he was captured by deceit. He was taken to Jabalpur, where the court sentenced him to death. Later his body was thrown near *Patalpaani* railway station. Today, a memorial stands there in his honour.

Lesson: Tantya Mama showed that a true hero is one who stands up for his people without expectation or reward, only out of courage and a sense of justice. His sacrifice reminds us that **“As long as there is justice and kindness in society — true heroes remain immortal.”**