

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

India shines at 75

India has come a long way to claim its position as a world leader. One India One People chronicles the selfless sacrifices of men and women in India's freedom struggle



KNOW YOUR UNSUNG HEROES

WESTERN INDIA'S TRYST

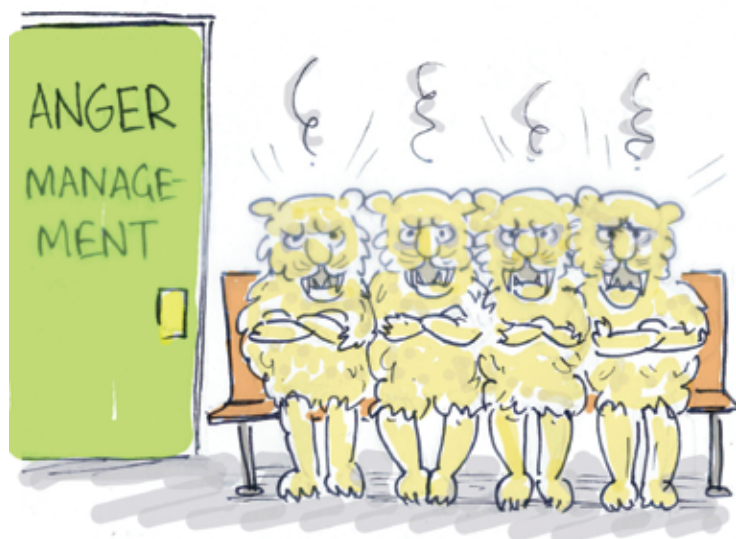
SOUTHERN CONTRIBUTION OVERLOOKED

Know India Better

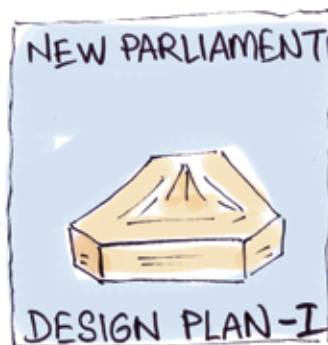
INDIA'S GATEWAY TO FREEDOM

Face to Face

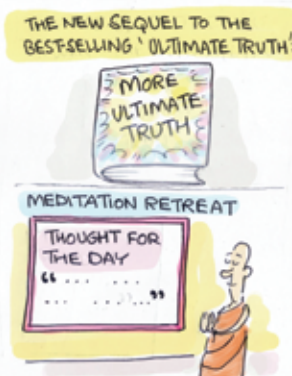
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India shines at 75!

*Every decade posed new set of goals and accompanying challenges to 'free' India. It has come a long way and today it has claimed its position as a world leader and is among the best performing major economies of the world. It is also finally reclaiming its heritage that got lost and was conveniently ignored for centuries. **Manu Shrivastava** looks at a new, emerging India.*



P M Narendra Modi inaugurating the new Parliament House in July 2022; (right) The national emblem made of bronze weighs 9,500 kg and is 6.5 meters in height

This year India completes 75 years as an independent nation. It was in 1947 when the country freed herself from the clutches of colonial British rule and as one of the youngest democracies of the world, India has come a long way. Today, India has claimed its position as a world leader and is among the best performing major economies of the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisioned and announced a series of events and activities to be carried out by various government departments, ministries and agencies to celebrate the 75 years of India's Independence. To further this, the Government of India (GOI) decided to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence, which falls on 15 August 2022, at national and international levels as part of the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*.

A National Implementation Committee under the chairmanship of the Home Minister was constituted for the commemoration to guide the policies and programmes to be undertaken by various Ministries of GOI under the India @ 75 commemoration.

Celebrating 75 years of freedom

The government also set up a National Committee under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of India with 259 members. The National Committee included dignitaries and eminent citizens from all walks of life and it would provide policy direction and guidelines for formulation of programs for the commemoration of 75th anniversary of Indian Independence.

The celebrations were launched 75 weeks prior to 15 August 2022 i.e., on 12 March 2021 which happens to be the 91st anniversary of the historic Salt Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi. The 75-week countdown to the 75th anniversary of Independence and will end post a year on 15 August 2023.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is also celebrating India's glorious history, its people, culture, achievements and more. This Mahotsav is dedicated to the people of India who have not

only been instrumental in bringing India thus far in its evolutionary journey but also hold within them the power and potential to enable PM Modi's vision of activating India 2.0, fuelled by the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).

India is marching towards self-reliance which is one of the cornerstones of freedom in the true sense. Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make In India initiatives are propelling India towards full and sustainable self-reliance.

As part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, every month a series of commemorative events are held across the nation organized by the ministries and departments to pay tribute to or in honour of forgotten heroes or the unsung catalysts of India's freedom movement.

For example, in July 2022, hundreds of events were held across the country on Kargil Vijay Diwas, Mangal Pandey's birth anniversary, azadi ki rail gadi aur stations, birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak called Kesari Utsav, Over the Moon with Chandrayaan that will celebrate Chandrayaan 2 and gear up for Chandrayaan 3 launch in August.

India's fight for freedom was not an easy one. Thousands of people sacrificed life of luxury, some even sacrificed their lives to make sure India becomes a free nation. Today, efforts are being made, constantly, to remember the unsung heroes of the freedom struggle and their sacrifices.

The new Parliament

On 12 July 2022, PM Modi unveiled the National Emblem cast on the roof of the New Parliament Building. He also interacted with the 'shramjeevis' who have been involved in the making of the Parliament and lauded their contribution towards the new Parliament building and to the nation.

The National Emblem is made of bronze with a total weight of 9,500 kg and is 6.5 meters in height. It has been cast at the top of the Central Foyer of New Parliament Building. A supporting structure of steel weighing around 6,500 kg has been constructed to support the Emblem.

The concept sketch and process of casting of the National Emblem on the roof of New Parliament Building has gone through eight different stages of preparation from clay modeling / computer graphic to bronze casting and polishing.

It was on 10 December 2020 when PM Narendra Modi had laid the foundation of the New Parliament Building. This was an intrinsic part of his vision of self-reliant India or 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. A Parliament made in 'free' India is a landmark opportunity 'to build a peoples' Parliament for the first time after independence' and one which will match the needs and aspirations of a 'New India' in the 75th year of Independence in 2022.

Futurist and inclusive approach

The construction of Parliament House of India is a milestone event in India's democratic history. It marks an important stage of the country's democratic traditions. It presents an opportunity to the nation to, along with building the Parliament, build the nation together.

India's present Parliament House is a colonial-era building that was designed by British architects Sir Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. It took six years to complete and was constructed fully in 1927. The building was originally called the Council House and housed the Imperial Legislative Council. In 1956, two floors were added for the need of more space and in 2006, Parliament Museum was added to showcase the 2,500 years of rich democratic heritage of India.

The New Parliament building has been envisioned to reflect the aspirations of New India and that of 135 crore Indians. With a built-up area of 65,000 sq ft, the new building is a triangular shaped building for optimal space utilisation. The new building will be futuristic and sensitive to the demands of the time.

Environmental sustainability is at the core of the Central Vista project, with a comprehensive plan to use centralised systems and infrastructure, promote the use of public transport and have upgradeable technology, systems and services.

The new building will have six granite statues of important personalities, four galleries each for the two Houses of Parliament, three ceremonial foyers, three India galleries and one Constitution gallery. Each wall in the building will have a dominant theme dedicated to those who have contributed in nation building such as a tribal leader or a woman leader.

India reclaims its rich heritage

In the initial years post-Independence, the focus of the leaders was nation building, ensuring education, employment, housing and health care and other basic facilities for one and all.

Over a period of time, the goal post also shifted and India had to secure its borders and make sure foreign enemy stays at bay. India even went to war with China and Pakistan on a few occasions. In time, with the advancement of science and technology, India hit the ground running in the space technology race and aced it.

Every decade posed new set of goals and accompanying challenges to 'free' India. It has come a long way and today comfortably shares stage with other world leaders. And, now, after 75 years, it's finally reclaiming its heritage that got lost and was conveniently ignored for centuries.

Slowly but steadily, Indians are finally getting over the colonial hangover and obsession with everything foreign or western. Indian history is a testimony of how advanced the region was culturally, socially, spiritually and scientifically. India was and continues to be the epicenter of knowledge. India gave the world its first university, the numeral zero, Ayurveda, plastic surgery and the list goes on. It's time to reconnect with our heritage and knowledge.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

Know your unsung heroes

Nandini Rao takes a look at India's freedom struggle and points out how women fought alongside men for the independence. The women not only fought like soldiers in the battlefield but were equally courageous when it came to questioning illegal and forceful colonisation of the British.



Rani Abakka, Velu Nachiyar, Rani Gaidinliu, Accamma Cherian and Durgabai Deshmukh were some of the many unsung women freedom fighters

India's freedom struggle could not have succeeded without the contributions of its freedom fighters. Today, every Indian is aware of the stalwarts of the country's fight for independence - Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, B R Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, K M Munshi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, etc. Each one of these played a crucial role in creating and building an independent India. Many of these were also involved in the debates and decisions of the Constituent Assembly and in creating the Constitution of India that made it a sovereign republic.

Besides these, there were revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Sukhdev, Ram Prasad Bismil, Udham Singh, Ashfaqulla Khan, Batukeshwar Dutt, Shivaram Rajguru, etc., who laid down their lives for their

country. Other than a few famous names, most people are not aware of the many revolutionaries and freedom fighters who sacrificed everything for the freedom of the country.

Knowing the freedom fighters

In April 2022, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated an exhibition on India's freedom struggle in the Parliament Library that was organised by Indian Council of Historical Research under the aegis of Ministry of Education. The event took place in the presence of Union Education and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, MoS for Education Annapurna Devi, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal and Members of Parliament from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The exhibition showcases stories from India's history in the duration of about 200 years i.e., from 1757 to 1947. The purpose of this initiative is to bring to light the stories of unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle whose sacrifices went unnoticed. Indian citizens and legislators from across India can see the exhibition and suggest more names for the exhibition – unsung freedom heroes – from their own zones or constituencies, respectively. The exhibition is being showcased at 100 locations across India through digital platforms also. This will be done through the Ministry of Culture in association with the respective state governments.

In January 2022, a pictorial book on India's Women Unsung Heroes of Freedom Struggle was released as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in New Delhi. An initiative of the Ministry of Culture in partnership with Amar Chitra Katha, the pictorial book celebrates the lives of India's women freedom fighters who led the independence fight from the front. Another edition documenting the lives of unsung Tribal Freedom Fighters is underway.

In India's fight for freedom there was no gender discrimination. The history of the country is a testimony to how both men and women fought equally and together for the independence of their nation. The women not only fought like soldiers in the battlefield but were equally courageous when it came to questioning illegal and forceful colonisation of the British.

Women leading from the front

The Queen of Ullal, Karnataka, Rani Abakka from the Chowta dynasty is one of the many unsung freedom fighters and that a woman. She fought the Portuguese in the latter half of the 16th century and ruled over the area from the temple town of Moodabidri whereas the port town of Ullal served as the subsidiary capital.

Owing to the strategic location of Ullal, the Portuguese made several attempts to capture the port town but Abbakka repulsed each of their attacks for over four decades. She came to be known as Abhaya Rani for her bravery and is one of the earliest Indians to fight the colonial powers that invaded the country.

Similarly, Queen of Sivaganga Velu Nachiyar was the first Indian queen to wage war against the British East India Company. Also known as Veeramangai by the Tamils, Velu Nachiyar was the princess of Ramanathapuram and the only child of Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy and Rani Sakandhimuthal of the Ramnad kingdom and trained in martial arts, archery, etc.

She was compelled to fight when her husband, Muthuvaduganathaperiya Udaiyathevar, was killed by British soldiers and the son of the Nawab of Arcot. She escaped with her daughter and lived under the protection of Palayakaarar Kopaala Naayakkar at Virupachi near Dindigul for eight years. Later, she reclaimed the throne and succeeded her husband in 1780.

Bravery and courage personified

Everyone knows about Rani of Jhansi but very few will know of her woman soldier Jhalkari Bai who became one of the key advisors to the queen and played an important role in India's first war of independence in 1857. Her courage knew no bounds and during one battle she disguised herself as Rani Laxmibai to give the queen a chance to escape.

Andhra Pradesh's Durgabai Deshmukh worked tirelessly for the emancipation of women and was also an eminent member of the Constituent Assembly. Accamma Cherian from Travancore was also a leader of the freedom struggle and was given the name 'Jhansi Rani of Travancore' by Mahatma Gandhi. She was working as a teacher and later as a head mistress when in February 1938 the Travancore State Congress was formed and Accamma gave up her teaching career to join the freedom struggle.

Rani Gaidinliu born in present-day Tamenglong district of Manipur was a Naga spiritual and political leader who led an armed uprising against the British in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. In 1927, at the age of 13, Gaidinliu joined the Heraka Movement, which aimed at revival of the Naga tribal religion and establish self-rule of the Nagas (Naga Raj) ending the British rule. She was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to life imprisonment by the British.

Durgawati Devi provided safe passage to Bhagat Singh after the killing of John Saunders and furthered the freedom movement. There are many more such as Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Matangini Hazra from Bengal, Gulab Kaur, Chakali Iamma, Padmaja Naidu, Bishni Devi Shah, Parbati Giri, Tarkeshwari Sinha, Tuleshwari Baruah, Snehlata Varma, etc.

Selfless sacrifices for the nation

Apart from the women freedom fighters whose role in the freedom struggle is invaluable, there were several men who sacrificed everything to see India as a free nation. A member of the Anushilan Samiti, Atulkrishna Ghosh played a significant role in the Jugantar Movement and later provided refuge to several revolutionaries in his home and that of his relatives. Freedom fighter Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose carried out the Muzaffarpur Bomb Case of 1908 and later shot himself with his own revolver when he was about to be caught in the bomb case.

Bal Krishna Sharma, a politician and a freedom fighter, dropped out of college to join India's freedom movement. He was jailed by the British six times for his role in the independence movement and was later nominated to the Constituent Assembly from the United Provinces. A lawyer and freedom fighter, M A Jyengar was part of the non-cooperation movement and was jailed twice for his role in the freedom struggle. He fought hard to eradicate untouchability from the society.

Born in 1805, Maharashtra's Raghoji Bhangre, a Koli, challenged and defied the British rule in Maharashtra. He was the son of Ramji Rao Bhangre who also resisted the British rule and was subsequently hanged in Cellular Jail. He had killed a British Officer and ten constables in an ambush in 1844. Nashik's Anant Kanhere was a freedom fighter who killed the Collector of Nashik in British India. The incident was an important event in the history of Nashik and the Indian revolutionary movement. He was later prosecuted and hanged in Thane Prison in April 1910 at the age of 18 years only.

Nandini Rao is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Western India's tryst

*A certain Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi played a pivotal role in the freedom struggle from Gujarat's soil while the Phules ignited the movement in Pune. In her essay, **Anushka Sharma** refers to the Aga Khan Palace setting in the backdrop of the struggle and the liberation of Goa.*



Dandi March led by Gandhi

It was in 1930 that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi launched the protest against the British government's imposition of a tax on salt. The protest was one of non-cooperation as Bapu took 80 marchers along with him on a 390 kilometers long walk stopping at 21 historic places from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi. Along the way, thousands came to pay their homage. On reaching Dandi finally, they took a pinch of salt and sent the message of India's independence across the world.

Throughout the journey, Bapu stopped to rest some afternoons while at some, he stayed back for the night. It is the Dandi Path that carries with it the inspirational reservoir of memories.

Sabarmati ke sangh

Gandhiji's ashram was originally established at Jivanlal Desai's Kochrab Bungalow on 25 May 1915. Jivanlal Desai was a barrister and a friend. The ashram was then called the Satyagraha Ashram. Bapu was keen on carrying out activities such as farming and animal husbandry, in addition to other

pursuits that called for the need of a much larger area of usable land. Two years later, on 17 June 1917, the ashram was relocated to an area of thirty-six acres on the banks of the river Sabarmati and it came to be known as the Sabarmati Ashram.

This is believed to be one of the ancient ashram sites of Dadhichi Rishi who had donated his bones for a righteous war. The Sabarmati Ashram is located between a prison and a crematorium and Gandhi believed that a satyagrahi has invariably to go to either place. He had said "This is the right place for our activities to carry on the search for truth and develop fearlessness, for on one side are the iron bolts of the foreigners, and on the other the thunderbolts of Mother Nature."

Formation of Gujarat Vidyapith

Not many know that at the time Gujarat Vidyapith was founded in Ahmedabad, it did not have its own building. It had been initiated from Dahyabhai Jyotram Mehta's (Vakil) bungalow near Kochrab Ashram on November 15, 1920 from where

Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya. As the bungalow started to register space constraints compounded with the looming threat of plague, Vidyapith was shifted to Aga Khan Estate near Nehru bridge where a building stands now.

It ran from there briefly till on March 9, 1923 when the foundation stone of Pranjivan Vidyarthi Bhawan was laid by scientist Prafulla Chandra Ray which, after following its completion, was inaugurated by Gandhi in 1925.

Bhil massacre obscured in history

On March 7, 1922, in the remote corner of Gujarat inhabited by Bhil tribes, villagers from Pal Dadhvaav and Chitariya villages in Sabarkantha, gathered under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat on the banks of a river to protest the land revenue system imposed by the British and feudal lords.

Soon, soldiers from Mewad Bhil Corps arrived at the procession and under direction from officer Major H G Saturn fired randomly on the gathering. About 1,200 innocent tribals were killed in the unprovoked firing. Dhekhadiya and Dudhiya wells were left overflowing with bodies. Reportedly, in the firing, Tejawat was shot twice in the thighs and his companions carried him away on a camel to a hill by the river.

The incident that occurred just three years after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was largely forgotten and left obscured from official records. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his tenure as the Gujarat chief minister had Shaheed Smriti Van and Shaheed Smarak monuments constructed at the site.

The Palchitaria massacre was washed and forgotten in the leaflets of history. The official diary maintained by Sutton had no mention of the massacre at Palchitaria yet had references to the much smaller incidents involving Bhils in the same area around that period.

There were two reasons the incident never made to the history books. First, those who died were poor and illiterate tribals. Also, the British government had already faced a lot of flak after the Jallianwala episode and took all possible steps to suppress the incident.

Incidentally, then, thousands of tribals had gathered to hear Tejawat who had 21 demands on his agenda he raised on behalf of the tribals, including lowering the revenue or lagaan levied on tribal farmers.

The meeting was held on the banks of Heir River on a three-acre land. Following the firing, there were corpses strewn everywhere. Some of the corpses were dragged away by family members and friends, while the remaining were dumped into a well nearby. After narrowly escaping the massacre, Tejawat stayed underground till 1929, allegedly at the request of Mahatma Gandhi. After that, he remained in jail for seven years.

On visiting the spot after India got her Independence, when Tejawat visited the place to pay respect to the martyrs, he named the spot of the massacre 'Virubhumi' Tejawat. The massacre became part of the local folklore but did not get a place in the history books.

Aga Khan Palace and Bapu

Pune's tryst with India's freedom struggle has been legendary. The magnificent Aga Khan Palace on Nagar Road, built in 1892 by Sultan Mohammed Shah, is a sprawling premises with well-manicured lawns.

The Aga Khan Palace played a pivotal role in India's Independence Movement. It was here that political leaders such

as Mahatma Gandhi, Kasturba Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu and Mahadev Desai were imprisoned during the Quit India Movement from 1942 to 1944. A small amount of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were also housed in a tomb in a garden close to Kasturba Gandhi's samadhi.

The palace also houses a Gandhi museum where his personal belongings such as utensils, slippers, letters and clothes are exhibited. Anecdotes from the past can be seen narrated on the walls of the palace which are decorated with black and white pictures of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle.

The Phule story

Pune would be incomplete without her wadas which historically important hidden gems in the nook and corner of the city. Among such wadas is the humble-abode-turned-wada, Phule Wada.

Located between the cluster of multi-storey buildings, Phule Wada was home to visionary reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule, who dedicated their life fighting against social evils and promoting girl child education.

Their house has now been converted into a museum and houses photographs of Mahatma Phule and Savitribai. It narrates the life, struggle and work of the two luminaries.

Jail for the fighters

This 150-year-old Yerwada jail has held immense historic importance during India's freedom struggle. Here revolutionaries and freedom fighters such as Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Motilal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were imprisoned.

Also, and importantly, the Poona Act, an agreement to uplift the depressed section of the society between Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar was signed under a tree in this very premises. The tree stands tall in the jail's courtyard since the jail was opened for tourism by the Maharashtra state government.

Goa to rewrite history

It was on June 18, 1946 that began a new defining phase of Goa's freedom struggle that ended with the liberation of Goa, 15 years later on December 19, 1961. It was on the evening of June 18, 1946, at Margao an unforgettable day in the history of Goa's freedom struggle.

Then, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, a great nationalist and valiant freedom fighter against the British Rule, arrived in Margao and defied the Portuguese regime. The Goa government is working closely with the Centre to give official recognition to freedom fighters who participated in Goa's freedom struggle, particularly the satyagraha at Patradevi and Karwar in August 1955.

Incidentally, this year, the Lohia Maidan at Margao and the Martyrs' Memorial at Patradevi will be completed and the Martyrs' Memorial will bear the names of all the 70 freedom fighters who were killed by the Portuguese.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analyzing sources of news.

Southern contribution overlooked

*It is rather too late that the role played by South Indians in rebelling against the colonial British rule is finding its place in history when it comes to the freedom struggle. Referring to a 2016 documentary, **Kriti Kalra** highlights the role played by the Thevar community in the country's epic freedom struggle.*



Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar was a freedom fighter cum spiritual leader who worked with Subhash Chandra Bose

The first South Indian to rebel against the British rule, Puli Thevar, fought between the 1750s and 1760s. He among scores of other freedom fighters from the Thevar community have now been finding their true place in history. It was only recently in 2016 that a documentary, commemorating the efforts of freedom fighters belonging to the Thevar community, was released on the 15th anniversary of the Marathiya Manila Thevar Munnetra Peravai, an association of the community in Mumbai.

The 20-minute documentary 'Contributions of the Thevar Community to the Indian Freedom Movement' gives a glimpse of the role the community played in the freedom struggle. At the function held at Shanmukhananda auditorium in Mumbai, the contributions of five Thevar freedom fighters were commemorated in the presence of over 2,500 members from the community.

Ramnad and Ramanathapuram

The princess of Ramanathapuram and the only child of the royal family of the Ramnad Kingdom, Velu Nachiyar was trained in many methods of combat, including war match weapons usage, martial arts like Valari, Silambam, horse riding, and archery. She was a scholar in many languages and proficient in languages like French, English and Urdu. She married Muthu Vaduganatha Periyavudaya Thevar of Sivagangai, with whom she had a daughter.

However, when her husband, Muthu was killed in a battle with East India Company in 1780 following his refusal to pay taxes, she ran away from Sivagangai as a fugitive and sought the help of Hyder Ali. After initially refusing to help her, Hyder Ali went on to provide her 5,000 soldiers and gunpowder

weapons. Velu Nachiyar also sought the help of rich merchants as well. And, after eight years of planning along with support of many feudal lords, Tipu Sultan, Marudhu brothers and Thandavarayan Pillai she fought against the British East India Company. Velu Nachiyar found the place where the East India Company stored their ammunition and her commander Kuyili made a suicide attack on the ammunition depot and blew it up. Nachiyar went on to reinherit the kingdom of her husband, and ruled it for ten more years.

In 1790, she was succeeded by her daughter Vellacci. She granted powers to her daughter with the Marudu brothers to help with the administration of the kingdom. Velu Nachiyar died a few years later, on 25 December 1796.

South India's contributions to history would be incomplete without mention of Maruthu Pandiyars - Periya and Chinna Maruthu, sons of Mookiah Palaniappan Servai, natives of Mukkulam, near Narikudi which was 18 miles away from Aruppukottai. Both the brothers were born at Mukkulam in the years 1748 and 1753 respectively. The first son was named as Vellai Marudhu alias Periya Marudhu and the second son as Chinna Marudhu. Following the reinheritance of the kingdom by Velu Nachiyar after an alliance of kingdoms led by the Pandiyar attacked Sivagangai and retook it in 1789, the Marudhu Pandiyars, planned to war against East India Company in India.

The Fort of Tiruputhur

They gave the protection to Oomathurai Kumaraswamy seeking refuge from the chaos of war. Alongwith war leader Sivagangai and many of their family members, they were captured at Cholapuram and killed at Tirupattur. They were hanged on 24 October 1801 in the fort of Tiruputhur that now falls in Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu. The Maruthu Brothers were brilliant in aerodynamics and invented many variants of spears and Valari. They also founded guerilla war tactic in India during the early stages of colonisation. In October 2004, a commemorative postage stamp was released. Till date, every year people conduct Maruthu Pandiyars Guru Pooja at the Kalayarkovil temple, in October. Kalaiyarkoil was the seat of the kings from very early days. King Vengai Marban ruled over this area during Sangam period. It was the stronghold of rulers of Sivangangai. It was also the seat of the freedom fighters like Muthu Vatuka Natha Thevar and Maruthu brothers.

Very often, politicians are known to 'pay respects' at Madurai's Perungamanallur pillar. The site commemorates 16 Kallars (a sub-group of the Thevars) gunned down by the British for protesting their status as a 'criminal tribe'. The Perungamanallur massacre of 1920 is often referred to as 'the Jallianwala Bagh of the south'. It was on 3 April 1916 that 16 persons from Piramalai Kallar community, including a woman, were shot dead and as many as 63 people tortured under detention for their opposition to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911. The community was, in particular, objecting to the practice of registering the fingerprints of all the members as per the Act.

Revolt in Vellore

A revolt known as the Vellore Mutiny, or Vellore Revolution, occurred on 10 July 1806 and was the first instance of a large-scale and violent mutiny by Indian sepoys against the East India Company, predating the Indian Rebellion of 1857 by half a century. The full-day revolt took place in the South Indian city of Vellore, during which mutineers seized the Vellore Fort and killed or wounded 200 British troops. The mutiny was subdued by cavalry and artillery from Arcot. Total deaths amongst the mutineers were approximately 350; with summary executions of about 100 during the suppression of the outbreak, followed by



Vellore Fort that witnessed two decisive political battles - the Battle of Talikota (1565) and the Battle of Toppur (1616-1617 CE)

the formal court-martial of smaller numbers.

The mutiny was triggered by resentment felt towards changes in the sepoy dress code, introduced in November 1805. Hindus were prohibited from wearing religious marks on their foreheads while on duty and Muslims were required to shave their beards and trim their moustaches. In addition, they were ordered to wear a round hat resembling that associated at the time with both Europeans in general and with Indian converts to Christianity. These measures offended the sensibilities of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys and went contrary to an earlier warning by a military board that sepoy uniform changes should be "given every consideration which a subject of that delicate and important nature required".

Situated at the head of the present-day state of Tamil Nadu, in the city of Vellore, the Vellore Fort was built in the 16th century CE under the Vijayanagara Empire. There have been two decisive political battles- the Battle of Talikota (1565) and the Battle of Toppur (1616-1617 CE) after which the fort became a site of contestation for the Bijapuri rulers, Marathas and British and the French till India gained independence. Historically known for the coup of 1614 CE and the famous 'Vellore mutiny', the political significance of this fort is complemented by its robust architecture.

A temple dedicated to Lord Shiva

Built in the Dravidian style of architecture, the Fort a deep wet ditch (moat) where around 10,000 crocodiles once swarmed. It has huge double walls with bastions, projecting irregularly, and ramparts on which two carts can be driven abreast. Resting on an unbroken mountain chain, this fort was constructed using granite sourced from the quarries of Arcot and Chittoor. This fort complex exemplifies a secular past as it comprises a mosque, a church, called the St. John's Church as well as a temple which has received considerable attention.

The Jalakanteshwarar Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is famous for the exquisite carvings, large wooden gates and stunning monoliths. Apparently, Chinna Bommy Reddy, one of the builders of the fort, had a dream in which Lord Shiva asked him to build this temple at the given site. The site is said to have contained an ant-hill suspended in the middle of stagnant water. A wanderer is believed to have placed a Shiva *lingam* here which came to be highly revered. Jalakanteshwarar is translated as Lord Shiva residing in water.

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The uprising in Central India

While the freedom struggle was gathering full steam elsewhere, the central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha chipped in with no less contribution to throw out the British Raj. **Vedika Jain** traces the resistance movements in these regions including the Champaran Satyagraha.



A file picture of the Champaran Satyagraha led by Mohandas K Gandhi

The central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha have also played a very important role in India's freedom struggle. Some of these regions were actively participating in the independence movement and the revolts against the British rule.

It was the Portuguese who were the first European to enter Bihar for trade of spices, etc. Later, in 1579, Mughal king Akbar allowed the Portuguese to establish a factory at Hooghly and about 20 years later the Portuguese built a convent and a church in Bandel.

Arrival of the British

The British, through the East India Company, built a factory at Alamganj in Patna in 1620 but it got closed a year later. After three decades, the British revived the factory and it is now a printing press at Gulzar Bagh. The Dutch East India Company too established a factory in Patna in 1632 followed by the Danes East India Company that established their factory at Nepali Kothi in Patna in 1774.

The Battle of Buxar of 1764 was fought between the

British and the Mughals and the Nawabs of Bengal and Awadh. It led to the two treaties of Allahabad for the Diwani rights of Bengal and Bihar. These were the early signs of oppression by the British.

The revolt of 1857 had reached Bihar also where it started on 12 June 1857 in the Deoghar district which is now in Jharkhand at the headquarters of the 32nd Infantry Regiment. Two British officers Lt. Norman Leslie and Sergeant Dr. Grant were involved in this revolt that was soon crushed.

A few days later, on 3 July, the uprising reached Patna under Peer Ali and other rebels. They first attacked a Roman Catholic priest's house who had escaped and later killed Dr Lyell who was the principal assistant to an opium agent. Many rebels were shot and killed by the British.

The first resistance

The first widespread uprising in this region was the revolt at Danapur Cantonment on 25 July 1857. It was, however, soon crushed because the Maharajas of Darbhanga, Dumrao, and Hatwa and their landlords connived with the British to bring

down the rebels.

Kunwar Singh also known as Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur emerged as the fiercest leader of the First War of Independence in the region. He was a leader and a military commander from a family of Parmar Rajputs of the Ujjainiya clan from Jagdishpur that now lies in Bhojpur district of Bihar. At the age of 80, he successfully led a contingent of 4000 soldiers and put up a strong front against the British. He was supported by his brother Babu Amar Singh and commander-in-chief Hare Krishna Singh. An expert in guerrilla warfare, Kunwar Singh assumed command of the soldiers who had revolted in Danapur and occupied the district headquarter, Arrah.

Despite the converging British forces, he reached Lucknow in December 1857 and in March 1858 occupied Azamgarh with other rebel leaders such as Nana Saheb and kept the British at bay. On 23 April, he won a battle near Jagdishpur against a force led by Captain le Grand and three days later died in his village.

Bihar also witnessed several tribal revolts but those were mostly unorganised and restricted geographically. These started in early 19th century and primarily were against the British policy to destroy tribal land ownership. These include the Ho and Munda Uprisings, Bhumij Revolt, Kol Uprisings, Munda Revolt, Santhal Uprising, Tana Bhagat Movement, etc. Some protested the British land revenue policy, alienation of tribal land, religious restrictions, etc.

The Champaran Satyagraha

The first Satyagraha movement or Civil Disobedience Movement was started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1917 and was a very important event in the timeline of India's freedom struggle. Rajkumar Shukla and Raam Lal Shah had invited Gandhi to examine the Tinkathiya system that forced peasants to grow indigo on 3/20th of their total land without any payment for it. The farmers' uprising took place in Champaran in Bihar and the movement forced the British government to form a committee called the Champaran Committee to look into the issue.

Mahatma Gandhi was also made a member of the committee and he highlighted the atrocities committed on the farmers under the system and that it should be abolished and the farmers be compensated appropriately. This development was the first win of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement.

Bihar remained a very active participant in all the movements and protests launched during the freedom struggle. Some of the famous freedom fighters from the region are Swami Shahjanand Saraswati, Shaheed Baikuntha Shukla, Anurag Narayan Singh, Loknayak Jaiparakash Narayan, Bhadra Yajee, among others. Upendra Narayan Jha 'Azad' and Prafulla Chaki were also active revolutionaries from the state.

In neighbouring Odisha, the movement gathered momentum during 1921 when Mahatma Gandhi visited the state for the first time and continued gaining strength till the country's independence. There were several freedom fighters from the state that included Pandit Nilakantha Das, Dr. Mahatab, Chintamani Mishra, Gobinda Chandra Mishra, etc.

Remembering the sacrifices

Uttar Pradesh contributed in a big way to the freedom struggle as many revolts and protests began on its soil. In Bareilly, in the commissioner's office stands a black obelisk that



The 1857 'Sepoy Mutiny' was led by Mangal Pandey

that replaced an old banyan tree that witnessed the freedom movement and British atrocities. Here, on the branches of the tree, 257 revolutionaries were hanged during the 1857 revolt. Meerut, another city in Uttar Pradesh, is where Mangal Pandey initiated the mutiny and refused to use the cartridges given by the British. He was a sepoy (infantryman) in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) regiment of the British East India Company.

In Agra, the Purani Chungi ground adjoining the Yamuna Kinara Road is where freedom fighters would gather and it's here only that a youth who laid down his life for the nation during August Kranti on 10 August 1942. Uttar Pradesh was also home to Raja Chait Singh of Banaras who defeated Governor-General Warren Hastings's forces. The British had demanded a huge amount of revenue from the king to which the king refused. The British then sent an army to fight the king that was defeated.

Banaras is also the birthplace of Rani Laxmibai who was born near the Assi Ghat. Named Manikarnika Tambe, she spent her childhood in Varanasi till her marriage to the King of Jhansi in 1844. After her husband died, she took charge and resisted the British on the battlefield as well. Chandra Shekhar Azad who never let the British live in peace was closely associated to Allahabad. On 27 February 1931, he came to visit Sukhdev in a park. A friend tipped the police and he was soon surrounded by policemen. After a gun battle, and with no way out, Azad killed himself to keep his promise of never being caught alive. After Independence, the park was named Chandra Shekhar Azad Park where his statue has been erected.

Azad had met Ram Prasad Bismil who had formed the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), a revolutionary organisation, and became actively involved. He was also involved in the Kakori Train Robbery of 1925, the shooting of John P. Saunders at Lahore in 1928 to avenge the killing of Lala Lajpat Rai and in the attempt to blow up the Viceroy of India's train in 1929.

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How North mobilised its masses

Vedika Jain explains how the North triggered the mutiny with Indian sepoy who were serving the British East India Company with its flames spreading to Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, among others. The rebellion was unsuccessful but it lighted a fire that fueled many other rebellions and protests in the future that finally led to independence.



Punjab heroes : Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru

The fight for India's independence is not one battle or war but a series of concerted efforts by millions of like-minded individuals who collectively fought for decades and centuries for self-rule and independence. The British who first came to India as the East India Company to do trade with Indians later colonised the region.

The Company first came to India in 1608 and established its first Indian factory in 1613 at Surat in Gujarat. The second factory was established in 1616 at Masulipatnam on the Andhra Coast of the Bay of Bengal. The factories set up in India were giving high profits to the Company and this led James I to grant subsidiary licences to other trading companies in England. The British Raj i.e., the rule of the Queen or the Crown, officially began in 1858 when the British Government officially took over the East India Company after the mutiny of the sepoys, also known as the Indian Mutiny, Sepoy Mutiny, Sepoy Rebellion or the First War of Independence in India. It was widespread and prolonged lasting between 1857 - 59.

The mutiny was started by Indian sepoys or troops who were serving the British East India Company and soon spread to

Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, etc. The rebellion was unsuccessful but it lighted a fire that fueled many other rebellions and protests in the future that finally led to the independence of the nation. The northern provinces and regions played a very important role in resisting the British oppression and mobilising masses for the freedom movement.

The soldiers' mutiny

The first event of India's freedom struggle started from Ambala Cantt, which is now in Haryana, on 10 May 1857, a few hours before the beginning of the mutiny by the soldiers in Meerut. Soldier Sham Singh of the Native Infantry started the revolt at Ambala by refusing to use the cartridges that had animal fat. Later, the soldiers of the Native Infantry in Meerut revolted led by Mangal Pandey.

The cartridges that were introduced earlier had a mixture of cow and pig fat. The cow was holy for Hindus and the pig was profane for Muslims. This move united Hindus and Muslims in India at the time who then revolted against the British in rebellion.

Several towns and villages of Ambala, Rohtak, Hisar, Rewari, Hansi, Sirsa, Panipat, Thanesar and Gurgaon became the centers of the freedom revolution where the revolutionaries fought with the British. Soon after, the peasants, soldiers of the British Army and local leaders came together to revolt against the British.

Another town in Haryana, Rohtak also witnessed an uprising against the colonists. A risaldar in the British Army Bisarat Ali of Kharkhauda along with a local peasant leader Sabar Khan came together and began attacking British people and properties. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak District William Loch left Rohtak. Later on 15 august 1857, Lt WSR Hodson along with Major General Wilson came with reinforcements to suppress the revolts in Kharkhauda and in Rohtak.

There was a lot of resentment among the people of the region against the British. On 29 May 1857, a few locals leading the revolt in Hissar, Sirsa, etc. Killed 12 Europeans including Deputy Commissioner of Hissar John Wedderburn and his wife and child. The revolt could only be controlled by November of the same year when the British re-consolidated their hold in the region.

Freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai started his public life from Haryana. The non-cooperation movement also received a lot of support from Haryana especially in Panipat, Rohtak, Dadri, Gurgaon, etc.

Leading from the front

Punjab gave India some of the biggest and fiercest freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Udham Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha and many others who led the freedom movement.

Revolutionary Sardar Bhagat Singh (1907- 1931) and his associates decided to avenge the death of independence movement leader Lala Lajpat Rai aka Punjab Kesari who had succumbed to injuries sustained during a lathi charge during a protest against the Simon Commission. The Commission was boycotted by Indian political parties because it did not include any Indian members.

When the Commission visited Lahore on 30 October 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai led a non-violent march and gave a slogan "Simon Go Back!". Here, police superintendent in Lahore James A. Scott ordered the lathi charge on the protesters and personally assaulted Lala Lajpat Rai.

In a case of mistaken identity, Bhagat Singh signalled to shoot John P. Saunders, an assistant superintendent of the Lahore Police. He was shot by Rajguru and Singh while leaving the District Police Headquarters in Lahore on 17 December 1928.

Bhagat Singh, along with Batukeshwar Dutt, threw non-lethal bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly and voluntarily offered himself for arrest to highlight the nationalist cause. Bhagat Singh, Shivram Hari Rajguru and Sukhdev were tried in the Lahore Conspiracy case and hanged on the night of March 23, 1931. The cremation was done on the banks of Sutlej River to evade public uprising.

The trial of Bhagat Singh and Ram Prasad Bismil (in Kakori case of 1925) inspired Hari Kishan of Punjab to kill the Governor of Punjab when he was to preside over the Punjab University Convocation in Lahore on 23 December 1930. The futile attempt led to Kishan's trial and subsequent death sentence.



Lala Lajpat Rai led "Simon Go Back"

Neighbouring regions joined in

After the revolt of 1857, anti-British risings were seen everywhere in the region what is now Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. So, in the Punjab Hills in Nalagarh, Kasauli and Kangra, then on the North-west frontier in Naushehra and Mardan and at Lahore, Sialkot, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, etc.

Simultaneously, the King of Ballabgarh, the Nawabs of Jhajjar and Dadri, the Rao of Rewari, Meo tribe, Jats and the peasants all joined in to support the revolutionaries against the British. Kukas leader Baba Ram Singh who was working towards religious reforms and revival also converged with the protests against the British. He was one of the first to use swadeshi and boycott and shunned the use of all things British such as their postal system, courts, official institutions, etc.

Even before the 1857 revolt, the kings in the hills states resented the British who did not keep their word in terms of granting them the old estates. So, in the Anglo-Sikh war of 1848, the principalities of the Kangra hills supported the Sikh army. Soon, the hill principalities of Kangra, Jaswan, Nurpur and Datarpur rebelled against the British. The rebellion was suppressed and the defiant were taken to Almoda where they died later.

After the 1857 mutiny, the first resistance came from the Kasauli Soldier Cantonment. The soldiers of the Nasiri Battalion of Jutogh in Shimla and the 80 soldiers of the Kasauli Guard who had looted the government treasury led the uprising under Subedar Bhim Singh. The rebel soldiers were arrested but Bhim Singh managed to escape to Rampur where he later committed suicide upon hearing the news of the failure of the revolt.

In June 1857, Pratap Singh of Kullu led a revolt with Vir Singh. They were arrested and hanged to death in Dharamsala. Over the years, several revolts, non-cooperation policies and open support to the revolutionaries continued.

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Patriotism on celluloid

Ruchi Verma dwells on Bollywood hitching onto the patriotic bandwagon and says nationalism, as a theme, has always attracted filmmakers and drawn packed crowds. She indicates that both Hindi and other regional languages have seen a surge in films with 'unsung' freedom fighters and freedom struggle as their theme(s).



Akshay Kumar in 'Kesari' based on the Battle of Saragarhi and the exceptional bravery of 21 Sikh soldiers of the British Indian Army

The role of cinema in triggering change, documenting reforms, good work and capturing the lives and contributions of trailblazing individuals and reformers cannot be understated. Since the very beginning of cinema, filmmakers have strived to make films that showcase the lives of social reformers, change-makers and patriotic protagonists.

Nationalism, as a theme, has always lured filmmakers and drawn crowds to the cinema halls. A film on a soldier trying to save the country from a foreign enemy or a spy who risks his life to ensure his countrymen stay safe is a hit theme. Recently, Indian cinema, both Hindi-language and regional languages, has seen a surge in the release of films that focus on 'unsung' freedom fighters and on incidents and battles for the freedom of the nation.

Interestingly, such films have been received very well by the audiences and now, with the massive reach of OTT in everyone's mobiles, if not homes, the viewership of such films has increased multi-fold. This has encouraged more producers and

creators to create content, web series, documentaries and films along the same lines.

Bollywood on patriotic bandwagon

Actor Akshay Kumar's *Kesari* that was released on Holi in 2019 is based on the Battle of Saragarhi and the exceptional bravery of 21 Sikh soldiers of the British Indian Army. Akshay plays the role of Havildar Ishar Singh in the film based on the act of valour of the 36 Sikh Regiment of the British Indian Army against the Pathans.

The Battle of Saragarhi was one of the greatest last stands in military history where 21 Sikh soldiers held fort against more than 10,000 Pashtun tribesmen for over six hours. The battle took place at Saragarhi - a tiny, non-descript village in what was then the North-West Frontier Province - near present day Pakistan-Afghanistan border, a few hours outside Peshawar.

(Continued on page 28)



India's gateway to freedom

In a free-flowing account, Manu Shrivastava draws vivid pictures of how Mumbai (then Bombay) played an epic role in liberating the country from the clutches of the Britishers, mentioning all those people and institutions who were at the epicenter of the struggle. The city was host to some of the most powerful mass movements that have become landmarks in the history of the movement.



Kranti Gatha Gallery inside the underground British-era bunker at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai is a tribute to known and unknown revolutionaries of the Indian freedom movement. It was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi in June 2022

Mumbai may be India's financial capital today but the city had been at the centre of India's fight for freedom for decades and played a very important role in the growth of the political consciousness of the nation. Each city or region played a unique role in terms of its contribution to the freedom struggle. These included Delhi, Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, etc. The port city of Mumbai, however, that headquartered the administrative subdivision of the Bombay Presidency at the time, in time became equally involved in the freedom struggle against the British rule. And, structures and zones that were once hosting freedom fighters, revolutionaries and luminaries building the nation, today, pepper the landscape of the financial capital of India. Mumbai is the city where the Indian National Congress came to be and it was in Mumbai that some of the most powerful mass movements against the British were launched including the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Quit India Movement.

The iconic Gateway of India

If there's one structure that has always been synonymous with Mumbai, it's the Gateway of India located in the city's historic Colaba precinct. A trip to Mumbai is incomplete without visiting the Gateway of India. Other than the exquisite architecture and an imposing presence that leave visitors

awestruck and with a memory of a lifetime, the Gateway of India played a significant role in India's freedom fight as well. Everyone knows that the Gateway of India was constructed to commemorate the landing of British King George V and Queen Mary at Apollo Bunder. However, what most people don't know is that Gateway of India is also the place from where the last of the British troops left. The date was 28 February 1948 and the day marked the end of the 200-years-long British rule in India. The then Governor of Bombay Sir George Sydenham Clarke had laid the foundation of this structure on 31 March 1911 after getting the final design from George Wittet and the construction was completed in 1924. On the morning of 28 February 1948, thousands had gathered for the farewell ceremony. The units of the newly-formed Indian Army including the Maratha Light Infantry, Sikh Regiment, and the 3/5th Gurkhas provided guards of honour to the 1st Somerset Light Infantry - the last British serving battalion. The first Governor of Bombay of independent India Raja Maharaj Singh read out farewell messages. After the ceremony, the troops along with the General Officer Commanding in charge of the withdrawal of troops Major-General Lashmer Whistler marched out through the Gateway of India and embarked on the 'Empress of Australia' for their voyage back home. Home to many thinkers Behind every movement is an army of intellectuals who guide the masses to



Saravjanik Ganesh utsav was started by Lokmanya Tilak in Mumbai

ensure the movement reaches its logical conclusion. In Mumbai, the awareness started in 1885 with the formation of the Bombay Presidency Association by Dadabhoy Nauroji. Also known as the 'Grand Old Man of Indian Nationalism', Nauroji is regarded as one of the most important Indians during the birth of the nascent independence movement in the country. He maintained that foreign rule was not favourable for India and that independence is what Indians should strive for. Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak looked up to him. A statue of his is located opposite Flora Fountain at Hutatma Chowk in South Mumbai. The intensification of the Swadeshi movement, which started in Calcutta in 1905, had a huge impact on Bombay. Here, it was Lokmanya Tilak who spearheaded the Swadeshi movement. A nationalist and a teacher and one of the strongest advocates of Swaraj, he left his M.A. course midway to study law and obtained his LL.B degree from Government Law College in 1879. It was Bal Gangadhar Tilak who, in 1894, transformed the private, household worshipping of Lord Ganesha into a grand public event called the Saravjanik



Statues of revolutionaries inside the Bunker Museum



Gandhi lived at Mani Bhavan from 1917 to 1934. It was from here that the Non- Cooperation Movement was launched

Ganeshotsav. Inspired by freedom fighter Shrimant Bhausaheb Rangari who installed the first 'sarvajanik' Ganesha idol in his home located in Shalukar Bol in Pune, Tilak went ahead to install a Ganesha idol in news publication Kesari's office in 1894 as a symbol of national pride and unity. He popularised Ganesh Chaturthi as a national festival bridging gaps of caste, community, etc. Today, Ganesh Visarjan at Girgaon Chowpatty is symbolic of the unity and fervour of Ganeshutsav in Mumbai and across India. Chowpatty has another strong connection with the freedom movement. A mass demonstration was held at Girgaon Chowpatty after the passing of the infamous Rowlatt Act of 1919. Here, men, women even children gathered at the beach donning black clothes to observe a 'Black Sunday'. A statue of Bal Gangadhar Tilak stands tall at Chowpatty today, at the exact spot where he was cremated. He died on 1 August 1920, the same day when Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Gandhi and Mumbai

One of the most important political events in India's independence movement, the foundation of the Indian National Congress was laid on 28 December 1885 at Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit Pathshala, near Gowalia Tank in Bombay in the presence of 72 delegates. Then, A O Hume assumed office as the General

Secretary and Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee of Calcutta was elected the President. Besides Hume, two additional British members (both Scottish civil servants) were members of the founding group named William Wedderburn and Sir John Jardine. Other members of the Congress were from the Bombay and Madras Presidencies and included Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha. The first session of the Indian National Congress was held from 28 December to 30 December in the same school. The other important event in Bombay was in early 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi left South Africa for good and chose to stay in Bombay. In Bombay, Gandhi lived at Mani Bhavan from 1917 to 1934. The two-storeyed building, located on Laburnum Road in Gamdevi, also played an important role in the freedom struggle. Gandhi launched the Non-cooperation Movement from Mani Bhawan in 1920. It's where in 1921 he did a four-day fast to restore peace in Mumbai. Here, Gandhi started his association with 'charkha' or the spinning wheel. Mani Bhavan is also the origin of various other movements such as Satyagraha, Swadeshi Movement, Khadi and Khilafat Movement. Meetings to launch Civil Disobedience movement were held here. After launching the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi was arrested from the very gates of Mani Bhavan. Today, the house is a museum representing Gandhi's life through his letters,



A memorial was constructed in 1970 at the August Kranti Maidan, Tardeo to commemorate the park's significance in the freedom struggle

pictures, portraits even the cloth which he learned to spin here. It also houses a Research Institute of Gandhian thought and Rural Development for post graduate students. The historic maidans of Mumbai India's freedom struggle was marked by mass protests that would see participation of thousands of countrymen who were willing to sacrifice their lives for a free India. Gowalia Tank Maidan aka the August Kranti Maidan located at Tardeo in Central Mumbai is where Mahatma Gandhi gave the Quit India speech on 8 August 1942 decreeing that the British must leave India immediately or else mass agitations would follow. With Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as President, the All India Congress Committee organised its Bombay session, which continued past-midnight into the next day. The venue was the Gowalia Tank Maidan, which was located 250 metres away from Gokuldas Tejpal House where the INC was founded in 1885. On 8 August 1942, the call for 'Quit India Movement' was given along with Gandhi's 'Do or Die' call. Here, Aruna Asaf Ali, popularly known as the 'Grand Old Lady' of the Independence movement, hoisted the Indian flag, the Tricolour, for the first time during the call for Quit India Movement. The slogan 'Quit India' was coined by socialist and trade unionist Yusuf Meherally who also served as the Mayor of Mumbai. Within a few hours of the resolution and the call, all national leaders were arrested who were released only after three years, after the World War II ended. In 1970, a memorial



Azad maidan – one of the historic maidans of Mumbai



It is said that Jamshetji Tata was inspired to build the Taj Hotel in Mumbai after he was refused entry at one of the grandest hotels of British time, Watson's Hotel

was erected in August Kranti Maidan to commemorate the park's significance in India's freedom struggle.

History-rich zone

At the corner of Nana Chowk, in a compound near August Kranti Maidan, is the old Congress House. Today, largely residential and unfortunately in a dilapidated condition, the Congress House compound was where ordinary Indians once gathered to raise their issue and grievances against the British rule. During the freedom struggle, several protests and demonstrations were launched from Congress House including a series of salt marches against the British economic policies. Jinnah People's Memorial Hall, located close to the Congress House, was built in 1919 as a tribute to Jinnah. As a lawyer, Jinnah crossed paths with Lokmanya Tilak and together they founded the All India Home Rule League in 1916. At the time, on 10 June 1919, Lord Willingdon held a war conference in Mumbai's Town Hall (now The Asiatic Society of Mumbai) to enlist Indian support for the war for which both Tilak and Jinnah were invited. At the conference, Tilak demanded that the British agree to the demands of the Home Rule League to which the Governor refused.



The Royal Opera House (then Opera House) at Charni Road was one of the public spaces used for demonstrations against the British rule



The Asiatic Town Hall holds a lot of historical value as it was used often for making official announcements

The Asiatic Town Hall

The exquisite Asiatic Town Hall is one of the most popular landmarks of Mumbai. It also holds a lot of historical value particularly from the times of India's freedom struggle. The Asiatic Library and Town Hall, characterised by iron pillars, a triangular roof on the facade, white paint and a false ceiling in the main foyer, was completed in 1833. The Town Hall was the cultural centre of Bombay with it being used often for official announcements, live performances for the British officers, etc. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Queen's proclamation was announced on the steps of the Asiatic Library. The then governor of Bombay, Lord Elphinstone, announced that the administration and control of the Bombay Presidency was being passed from the East India Company to The Crown, from the steps leading to the Town Hall. This was done because the 1857 revolt was considered a failure of the Company and The Crown stepped in to maintain law and order in the region. A statue of Elphinstone overlooks the reading hall there.



Liberty Cinema



A memorial was erected at Cooperage in Colaba to commemorate the 1946 Naval Uprising against the British Raj

The Bombay Harbour

The Bombay Harbour marked the first and the most prominent revolt by Indian sailors against the British Rule. The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 18 February 1946 took place here. The men posted at HMS Talwar announced a strike to oppose the Raj and, the next day, they took control of the naval trucks and started patrolling the city where they invited the masses to join. Eventually, Union Jacks were torn down and the rebels hoisted red flags. Also called the 1946 Naval Uprising, it was a rebellion by the Indian naval ratings, soldiers, police personnel and civilians against the British Raj. From Bombay, the revolt swiftly spread throughout British India and finally involved over 20,000 sailors in 78 ships and shore establishments across Calcutta, Karachi, Madras, Cochin and Vishakhapatnam. The uprising is considered as one of the key events of India's freedom struggle. On February 22-23, over 250 sailors were killed and others were forced to surrender who were later executed. The uprising, however, did jolt the very foundation of the British government in India and did lead to the British Prime Minister announcing that they would leave India before June 1948. To commemorate the 1946 Naval Uprising, a memorial was erected at Cooperage in Colaba in Mumbai by the Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy on 4 December 2001. Other historic structures Ajit Villa located at a walkable distance from Raghavji Road is also a significant landmark. During the Quit India Movement, the British initiated a massive crackdown on anyone who deemed a freedom fighter. So the Indian National Congress members devised a way to protect themselves in a manner they could also stay in touch with each other and with the events of the struggle. They formed the Underground Congress Radio. This was an illegal movement where members of the party would carry portable radio equipment and operate from multiple buildings, and not one. This was done to hoodwink the British officials so as not to get caught even as they carried their revolutionary activities.



Naval Uprising Memorial



Khilafat House at Byculla

One such building where the members of the INC operated from was the Ajit Villa. Close to Ajit Villa is one of the oldest theatres in the city, the Imperial Cinema. It's here that Jinnah met Gandhi for the first time when the latter returned from South Africa and presented a welcome speech for Gandhi. Liberty Cinema located in South Mumbai is an Art Deco 1,200-seater single screen movie theatre built in 1947. As it was built in the year of India's Independence, its founder Habib Hoosein decided to name it 'Liberty'. During the freedom struggle, Gandhi understood that the strength of the national movement was dependent on inclusivity. So, he decided to embrace the Khilafat Committee that was started by Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali Jauhar, known as the Ali brothers. The Khilafat Committee was created to defend Islam's holy sites of Mecca and Medina following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The home of the Khilafat

Committee is Khilafat House located in Byculla. Gandhi made the Khilafat Committee one of the main planks of the Non-Cooperation Movement. It became a movement that showcased Hindu-Muslim unity.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyond-Borders initiatives

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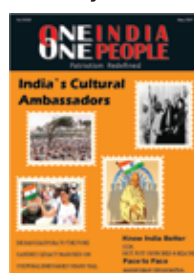
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“The best part of writing is being able to touch another human being, even fragmentarily.”

What strikes most when you meet **Saikat Majumdar**, a noted novelist who heads the Creative Writing Programme at the Ashoka University in Delhi, is his warmth and friendliness, rare among creative writers who wittingly or unwittingly, seem to build a wall of inaccessibility around them. He is not prolific by any means and has authored four unique novels over 15 years. Saikat is also a literary critic who writes non-fiction. The novels he has written are --Silverfish (2007), The Firebird (2015), The Scent of God (2019), and The Middle Finger (2022). His novels primarily deal with the themes and subjects like religion, memory, sexuality, history and education. Saikat's early works of fiction were published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta, including two short story collections – Infinitum Archipelago (1994), and Happy Birthday to You (1996); and two novellas: Hello Goodbye (1996) and Diminuendo (1997). An articulate person, he speaks to **Shoma A. Chatterji**.



Saikat Majumdar

How did writing happen? When did it happen and why?

Books were trusted, constant companions since childhood. I started to relate to the world through language; language started to mediate that relationship before other forms. I rediscovered images through language. The sensory was a work of language too. How could I speak back to the world? What could I return? It could only happen through the written word. I was too shy to perform or speak back then. Writing was also something one could do in hiding, under the guise of studies. Music or painting or theatre could not be hidden that way.

You began with short stories, then gravitated to novels. How did this transition happen?

I hope I write short stories again. But I haven't for nearly 20 years. I think there was a poet, perhaps a writer of haikus in me who couldn't muster the precision or the technical discipline of poetry. The slight expansiveness of the short story allowed for the poetic spirit without asking for its precision, though short stories have their own precision too. Subsequently, I fell in love with the fullness of human lives that required development. I left the momentariness and pointedness of the short story. But I still remain a slim-theme writer; multigenerational family sagas or large histori-

cal themes are not for me. Small but moving themes, rooted in particular atmospheres - that's what draws me. So my novels are quite short.

You have achieved a lot in terms of fame, intellectual enrichment, friends and so on. How do you look back on this journey while you are still very young?

One's growth as a writer and the quality of reading and engagement one gets are all that matters. The external trappings of fame or success are not really relevant, and neither is their lack. The readers I've gained - including many who have subsequently become friends - are among the greatest rewards. The best part of writing is being able to touch another human being, even fragmentarily.

Between teaching and creative writing, which brings you greater fulfillment and why?

I think of myself as a writer who also teaches, so writing is more fundamental to my identity. But I also love teaching. I hope I'm also able to teach through my writing, and create through my teaching, that they do not remain separable.



'The Middle Finger' book cover

How would you define terms like 'workshops', 'book readings', 'lectures' through your personal experience so far as creative writing goes?

Writing and teaching are both fundamentally about interacting with other souls. These different events/activities are just different platforms of interactions. Not through the silence of writing but the immediacy of embodied interaction.

How disciplined are you in your writing as you do not write novels frequently?

I spend a lot of time writing. Not sure what qualifies as 'frequent'. I can't imagine publishing a book a year, they take more time to finish and more importantly, to be revised. I'm an obsessive reviser. Even so, the new novel came three years after the last, and that after publication was delayed for the pandemic. That's quite frequent, no? A book takes years to shape up.

How do you distinguish between writing fiction and non-fiction?

My nonfiction also has a personal element and often a personal voice. Sometimes they require some scholarly knowledge. But still, without the personal element, I can't create a real stake in the text, either for me or the reader. Others do that too. I've been reading your beautiful book 'Satyajit Ray: from frame to frame', and the most enjoyable portions are the personal and the anecdotal ones, such as your interactions with Ray.

While editing others' works, what do you look for? Please explain - bylines of authors, theme if any, style, language, treatment,



Majumdar is Professor of English and Creative writer

composition etc?

I try to understand what the work 'wants' to become - not what I would like it to become based on my own thematic, stylistic, or generic preferences. Once I understand this, I try to help make it the best version of itself that it can possibly be. Of course, subjective preferences still come in, so it's crucially important the receiver of the feedback know who I am as a writer, my defining interests and values. All the elements you named, none of them are isolated entities; they all depend on one another. So does my editorial feedback.

Your four novels are more character-driven than plot or incident driven. Do you agree? Give reasons for your response.

I'm really glad you think so. Character, atmosphere, language, these are my defining interests as a novelist. If one can make the characters come alive, their lives look interesting too, and so interesting stories can take shape. The narrative is important to me too - just that character, atmosphere, language, are primary.

Who do you consider as mentors, ideals, heroes among Indian writers in English?

P. Lal, Amit Chaudhuri became early mentors and role models; during my MFA in the US, Wendell Mayo and Anthony Doerr, my professors there. I recently read RK Narayan's 'The Guide' and saw how truly Indian the English language novel can be. Anita Desai is a great inspiration too. And there is something solid, real, and enduring about Shashi Deshpande's worlds and human lives, though perhaps without an obvious feel of 'craft'.

Among all your novels, rank them in order of your own emotional fulfillment and give reasons for the ranking.

I wouldn't be a good parent if I did that, would I? Even if I have such an order in my mind, I should keep it to myself!



Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards.

Similarly, Vicky Kaushal starrer *Sardar Udham*, released in 2021, is a Hindi-language biographical historical drama film directed by Shoojit Sircar based on the life of a freedom fighter from Punjab, Udham Singh. He assassinated Michael O'Dwyer, the former lieutenant governor of Punjab, in London to avenge the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar. Another film named *Shaheed Udham Singh* was released in 2000 and depicted the life of Udham Singh. The film's cast included Raj Babbar, Gurdas Mann, Amrish Puri and Barry John.

Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi that was released in 2019 with Kangana Ranaut playing the lead role of the Queen of Jhansi depicts the life of Rani of Jhansi Lakshmibai and tells the story of her mutiny against the British rule. In a short span of time, Lakshmibai, the queen of the Maratha-ruled princely state of Jhansi became one of the leading figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and a symbol of the Indian resistance to the British rule.

Other films such as *Sardar* (1993) starring Paresh Rawal, Mangal Pandey – *The Rising* (2005) starring Amir Khan, *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002) starring Ajay Devgn, *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* (2004) depicted the lives of freedom fighters Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Indian soldier Mangal Pandey, revolutionary Bhagat Singh, leader Subhas Chandra Bose, respectively.

Regional films and unsung heroes

One of the latest releases, S S Rajamouli's *RRR* has set a new record in the streaming business. After breaking all records of theatrical releases, *RRR* also set new ones on OTT. Released in March 2022, *RRR* is not only one of the most successful Indian films of 2022 but one of the biggest grossers worldwide also, after minting over Rs 1,200 crore at the box office worldwide. Netflix also recently announced that the Hindi version of the film has become 'the most popular film from India' on the streamer globally with more than 45 million viewing hours across the world.

The film depicts a pre-Independence story woven around two real Indian revolutionaries in the 1920s - Alluri Sitarama Raju played by Ram Charan and Komaram Bheem played by N T Rama Rao Jr – and their fight against the British colonial rule.

Born in 1897 in present-day Andhra Pradesh, Alluri Sitarama Raju was an Indian revolutionary who waged an armed campaign against the British rule. He became involved in opposing the British in response to the 1882 Madras Forest Act restricting free movement of the tribals or the adivasis in their forest habitats and prevented them from practicing a traditional form of agriculture known as *podu*. Raju formed an army of adivasis and farmers and resisted the British by engaging in guerrilla tactics in the border areas of East Godavari, Visakhapatnam of the Madras Presidency.

Komaram Bheem, on the other hand, was a revolutionary leader and a Gond tribal in Hyderabad State of British India. He rebelled against the British and the feudal Nizams of Hyderabad during the 1930s that resulted in the Telangana Rebellion of 1946. He was killed in 1940 by armed policemen and today is part of Adivasi and Telugu folklore as a symbol of rebellion.

Another South Indian film, *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy* is a 2019 Telugu-language historical action film directed by Suren Reddy and produced by Ram Charan. The film is inspired by the life of independence activist Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy from the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh and stars Chiranjeevi in the titular role.



Vicky Kaushal in *Sardar Uddham*

Freedom fighter Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy was born in Rupanagudi village in 1806. He was the son of a former Telugu Palegaadu (a feudal title) Mallareddy and Seethamma and belonged to the Motati Clan of Reddy's. Reddy along with Vadde Obanna, his commander-in-chief, were the frontrunner of the freedom movement against the East India Company rule in India in 1847. As part of this, 5,000 Indian peasants revolted against the Company in Nandyal district.

The new rules that the Company brought in that changed the traditional agrarian system triggered the protests. These changes primarily included the introduction of the ryotwari system. Others included implementing working conditions that were discriminatory and exploitative especially to the smaller farmer and cultivator. The revolt finally ended with Reddy's death.

Film festival on patriotic films

In August 2021, the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting celebrated the Independence Day with a three-day Film Festival that showcased the best of Indian patriotic films through a package of 20 documentary films on freedom struggle and freedom fighters. The film festival was also screened on Films Division website and YouTube channel. The festival was organised as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - a unique initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.

India achieved freedom after the selfless sacrifices of thousands of revolutionaries and freedom fighters. The festival showcased films that were biopics of leaders such as Subhas Chandra Bose, Chandrashekhar Azad, Birsā Munda, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaq Ulla Khan, Baba Shahmal Jat, Dr Gopinath Bordoloi, Bagha Jatin, Matangini Hazra, Bankimchandra and a film dedicated to another set of unknown freedom fighters including Hanawant Sahai, Pandit Jayanandan Jha, Siva Gurunathan, Shantaram Vakil and Marimuthu Chettiar.

Additionally, select documentaries that highlighted important landmarks in the independence movement were also screened. These included films on India's first war of independence in 1857, the dawn of the Gandhian era, a call for Purna Swaraj, the Salt March and on the merger of the princely states post-independence.

Ruchi Verma is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.



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Netaji as seen on celluloid

Shoma A. Chatterji laments that the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose of the reel “*The Forgotten Hero*” is now indeed a forgotten hero in reality. She takes a look at all the films made on the legend in the past and regrets that except the Shyam Benegal film, all others have been lost in the footprints of time.



A scene from Shyam Benegal's film 'The Forgotten Hero' on Subhash Chandra Bose convincingly played by Sachin Khedekar

It is rather disconcerting that there are no films on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in updated VCD and DVD formats in music shops, shopping malls and even in film libraries, archives and OTT platforms. For a nation that proclaims Netaji as a national hero, this is sad. This seems to be the plausible reason why filmmaker Shyam Benegal decided to call his film on the great national leader *The Forgotten Hero* (2005.) This writer could find hardly ten notable films on Netaji while researching this paper but only one is available with Internet suppliers of DVDs of old films.

The first film made on Netaji, *Pehla Admi*, was made in 1950 and although directed by Bimal Roy, it used little footage on Netaji and instead dwelt on peripheral issues. A big fire in FTII, Pune destroyed all the cans of *Pehla Aadmi*. So, there is no way anyone can see it in the DVD versions either. There is no information about the film even on the Net.

Samadhi (1950), directed by Ramesh Saigal, was the biggest box office success of that year. The story is based on a true incident at INA. Netaji's public lecture persuading the young to fight against colonialism is said to have inspired the director. It became a hit probably because it was clearly a commercial film and used Netaji as an also-ran.

Hemen Gupta, who made two good films on the freedom struggle *42* and *Bhuli Nai* in Bengali, made his last film *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose* in 1966. Himself being in the INA, it was a feeling of nostalgia that motivated him to make the film. His most famous film was *Anandmath*.

The War of the Springing Tiger (1984) is a documentary produced by Granada television that focuses on why the Prisoners of War chose to join the INA during World War II. It also explores the role of the INA in the Burma and Imphal



A scene from the 1999 film 'The Forgotten Army' directed by Kabir Khan

campaign and in the independence movement. The documentary took contributions from Lakshmi and Prem Saigal. It looks closely at the 40,000 men who deserted the Indian Army to fight alongside the Japanese against the British during World War II for an independent India. They were led by Subhas Chandra Bose who rejected Gandhi's non-violence campaign.

The Forgotten Army (1999), directed by Kabir Khan and produced by Akhil Bakshi, retraces the historic march by going back to the place with veterans of the INA, Col Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon and Capt Sehgal to visit the old battlefields and search out their old comrades in Burma. The film has poignant scenes like Col Dhillon bowing before the cave which gave shelter to the soldiers at Mt. Popa as the British bombarded the area. The film ends at the Red Fort where the three INA stalwarts, Col Shahnawaz Khan, Col Prem Kumar Sehgal and Col. Dhillon were tried for waging a war against the British kingdom.

Shobhayatra (2004) is about people from different walks of life who dress up as freedom fighters for a procession to celebrate 50 years of Independence, organised by a gangster with political ambitions. Though the people wear masks and use history to hide their complexities, their real personalities show up in every instance. The film shows the past set in contemporary times. The characters play-acting Mahatma Gandhi (Prithvi Sankhala), Subhash Chandra Bose (Vineet Kumar), Jawaharlal Nehru (Denzil Smith), Rani Laxmibai (Divya Dutta) Lokmanya Tilak (Kishor Kadam) and Babu Genu come together for the procession and wait in a warehouse for their cue. The characters slip in and out of the historical figures they are supposed to play, drawing a parallel of their real self and the personalities they portray.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose – The Forgotten Hero (2005) is an understatement that lingers starkly loud. It stands apart for its simplicity and eye for detail and proximity with historical facts. It is a decent attempt at depicting a forgotten phase in Indian history without an iota of controversy amidst the mist of

Quit India and Gandhi, a phase no less substantial. Sachin Khedekar impresses with his natural acting and sans rhetoric.

Srijit Mukherjee's *Gumnaami* (1919) resurrects the mystery behind Netaji's death in the plane crash on 18 August 1945 and focuses on whether he died at all or returned to Lucknow as Gumnaami Baba, a sadhu who bore a striking resemblance to Netaji. Neither in reality, or in the film, does Gumnaami Baba ever even raise any hint that he is Netaji returned as Gumnaami Baba. Yet, a group is out to prove that this Baba is really Netaji and that he did not die in the plane crash. The locus of the entire film is on the Mukherjee Commission Hearings. An investigative journalist, Chandrachur Dhar (Anirban Bhattacharya), comes up with a third theory supported by his group, Mission Netaji. How he tries to convince the law and the land of his findings is what the film tries to show. The best part of the film is the way it explores the journey of the investigative journalist Chandrachur Dhar (an amalgamation of two names – Anuj Dhar and Chandrachur Ghosh – the two journalists who actually brought across their theory on Gumnaami Baba in their book *India's Biggest Cover Up* (2012).

Invisibility may be voluntary or coerced by history and politics. In case of Netaji, it is not voluntary because Netaji has done too much to will away his contribution in any way. His untimely and sudden disappearance did not permit him the space to make himself invisible. But this very disappearance could have made it politically convenient to 'forget' him and erase him from visible space that cinema offers. Is this 'invisibility' a political strategy of erasure of the great figure of India's national struggle for freedom? Or is it because of the selective amnesia Indians suffer from when it comes to a study of history and historical figures through the audiovisual medium of cinema and television?



Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards.

An actor of the masses

Balraj Sahni is remembered for his refined performances in some memorable films in Hindi cinema. But few know about his love for literature and the role he played in real life as a social activist. **Tirtho Bannerji** traces the lesser known side of the actor and his chequered journey before he made it to the film industry.



Balraj Sahni as Shambhu in the iconic movie 'Do Bigha Zamin'

My earliest memory of Balraj Sahni goes back to a scene from the 1953 movie *Do Bigha Zamin* where he is forced into a race against another hand-driven rickshaw puller. My breaths raced watching the gripping chase and the tragic end that ensued. I came to know years later that Sahni trained himself for the portrayal of Shambhu by pulling rickshaws barefoot on the hot asphalt of Calcutta streets for months, causing him blisters on the soles of his feet.

Another scene that continues to echo in my mind is the one from *Garam Hawa* (1973) - based on a story by Ismat Chughtai - in which Salim Mirza (played by Sahni) exhorts his son (enacted by Farooq Sheikh) to join the ongoing movement following the Partition: *Jao Beta, insaan kab tak akela ji sakta hai?* (Go son, how long can one live alone, isolated?) Those words summed up the movie's essence. Balraj Sahni battled personal tragedy - his daughter died of brain haemorrhage - while doing the film and he eventually succumbed to the massive grief. He

passed away, months before *Garam Hawa's* release.

Today, a lot of us - the younger lot mostly - know the actor for the song (Googled frequently on YouTube) 'Ae meri zohra jabeen' (Waqt, 1965). His popularity rests on this legendary Manna Dey number and a few more like 'Tujhe chanda kahoon ya tara' (Ek Phool Do Mali, 1969) and 'Tu pyar ka sagar hai' (Seema, 1955). However, very few know the long, chequered journey this man treaded before he made it to the film industry. In fact, it would come as a surprise for many that initially Sahni had a fright for camera lens. With time, he perfected the art and his sense of time in delivering a dialogue or depicting an expression were impeccable. His refined performances, with a gentle blend of simplicity and spontaneity made his characters very convincing and realistic. He never compromised on the truthfulness of a character, and this is what endeared him to all. *Kabuliwalaah*, *Anuradha*, *Paraya Dhan*, *Haqeeqat*, *Garam Coat*, *Lajwanti*, *Sone Ki Chidiya* and so many



Sahni singing 'Ae meri zohra jabeen' in the popular multi-starrer film Waqt (1965)

films in which he enacted an array of roles, proved he was an actor of the masses.

However, in his heart of hearts, he was a man who loved letters, words, literature, books. After teaching English in Rabin-dranath Tagore's Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan in the late 1930s at a paltry pay, he worked for a Wardha-based newspaper and got a chance to be in proximity with Mahatma Gandhi. Later, Sahni went to England and joined the BBC as a Hindi announcer. He came back from London and got actively involved in Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). It was his social activism that many people adored him for --- putting him on a higher pedestal than God. He wouldn't think twice while jumping into helping a community in distress, working class or supporting a cause whenever it struck his deep inner chord.

Once he spent weeks together in refugee camps lending a helping hand to volunteers after the Bangladesh War. On one occasion, he kept his coat on despite the heat to show solidarity with the junior artistes. The book 'The Non-Conformist -- Memories of my father Balraj Sahni' by his son Parikshat Sahni (Tagore gave the name Porikkhit (Parikshat) is replete with such anecdotes and a lesser known side of Balraj Sahni. It brings out the subtleties that groomed his persona and character. It is a lovely tribute to an actor who was child-like in his reactions to things, but at the same time very emotional and sensitive to the global happenings - which often found catharsis in his writings.

Did you know that Balraj ji won the Soviet Land Nehru Award for his book 'Mera Rusi Safarnama'? Gulzar saab once told me in an interview in 2015: "Balraj sahab used to confine himself to his make-up room during shooting breaks, and nobody dared

disturb him because everybody knew he must be engrossed in his writing". The Remington typewriter was his constant companion. Such was his deep commitment and application that he managed to snatch bits of moments from his busy schedule to write. Sahni also penned his memories about his Pakistan trip in a book, which won him huge acclaim. 'Meri Filmi Atmakatha' was another gem. Having started writing poems and articles in English, Sahni switched to Punjabi (Gurmukhi) at the suggestion of Tagore, who egged him on to write in his mother tongue.

He was the first president of All India Youth Federation, the youth wing of CPI. Sahni's 1972 speech at a convocation in JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) remains seminal for its incisiveness and insight. As long as we are enslaved in ourselves, we can't think freely, he believed. He spoke about courage as a cornerstone to achieve success. Sahni formed his own theatre group, The Juhu Art Theatre. These are just a tip of the iceberg of his contributions; most remain unaccounted for... because he never wanted them to be marketed or flaunted. Humility was ingrained in this spirited actor who never played to the gallery, defied all conventions and proved to the world that the tide always turns... "you just have to float and have faith!"



Tirtho Banerjee is a poet and journalist who specializes in environmental issues.

Whether welfare schemes!

Bharat Dogra mentions some of the prominent government schemes and concludes that these are more hyped and suggests the funds allocated for them are judiciously utilised and reach the intended beneficiaries.



A self-employment scheme for providing alternative livelihoods to manual scavengers is yet to make a headway

Every ruling government launches welfare schemes for the poor, needy and underprivileged. But how successful are they in reality? Are the allocated funds used properly? Is there a proper system to check the implementation of these grandiose schemes?

The Government periodically makes claims on its commitment to various welfare programmes. But many schemes and their implementation run into criticism. With statistics often quoted in support of claims and criticisms, people are only left confused.

Let us analyze claims and counter claims of some of the important welfare schemes and decide for ourselves.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a leading welfare scheme relating to maternity benefits and nutrition support. The Centre claims it has been spending an

average ₹ 2000 crore annually on the scheme. These claims alongside a picture of a beaming face of a young mother from a poor family gives a “feel good” impression. Critics, however paint a different picture.

They believe the scheme is the result of a provision in the National Food Security Act passed during the last days of the UPA government which commits the government to provide a sum of ₹ 6000 to all pregnant and lactating women, which will approximately cost the government exchequer ₹ 14,000 crore per year. The NDA government arbitrarily made changes in the legal provision to cover only the first-born child under this scheme (ignoring the earlier legal commitment to cover all child-births) and to reduce the payment made to a mother to Rs. 5000. The procedure of obtaining the benefit is cumbersome. Many qualifying mothers may not be able to avail. Hence critics claim that only ₹ 2000 crore has been spent annually instead of the committed ₹14,000 crore. Therefore, in reality, over a period of seven years, deserving mothers were deprived of

₹ 84,000 crore, say critics, keeping in view the original legal provision of the scheme. Moreover, despite inflation the amount of ₹ 5000 has not been increased.

The Nirbhaya Fund

This is another important scheme for ensuring safety and security of women that has invited criticism. The government claims to have allocated ₹ 6213 crore during the eight years preceding 2021-22.

Critics point out that the scheme was started with a commitment of ₹ 1000 crore. Due to inflation and Covid an increase in the budget was called for. A review in 2022 revealed that out of the ₹ 6213 crore allocated during the last eight years, only ₹ 4138 crore were disbursed and only ₹ 2922 crore utilized. The objectives under the scheme remain unaccomplished.

Self-employment Scheme of Liberation & Rehabilitation of Scavengers

The poorest of the poor in India are the manual scavengers. To improve their conditions, a self-employment scheme for providing alternative livelihoods to them was started by the Government of India. The government claimed to have allocated ₹ 1255 crore during the period 2014-15 to 2021-22 for this scheme. However, social activists say that of the total allocation; only ₹ 236 crore have been utilized, which is mere 19% of the allocation. The scheme has yet to make headway.

Pension schemes for senior citizens and widows

Pension for the elderly from poor households who do not have access to regular pension are disbursed through the scheme. Additionally, pension for widows and the disabled are also given. Critics urge that funds allocated for the schemes need to be substantially increased keeping inflation in mind.

A lot more needs to be done by the government through the welfare schemes for the needy. Allocations should be monitored so the funds are judiciously utilised and reach the beneficiaries. There is a need for better monitoring mechanisms and transparency in the disbursement of the funds. GOI should respond positively to constructive criticism and suggestions, to achieve the desired goals.



The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Protect Earth Now. His recent books include *A Day in 2071*, *Planet in Peril* and *Man over Machine*.



DR VENKATARAMAN KRISHNAMURTHY (1925-2022)

The turnaround specialist

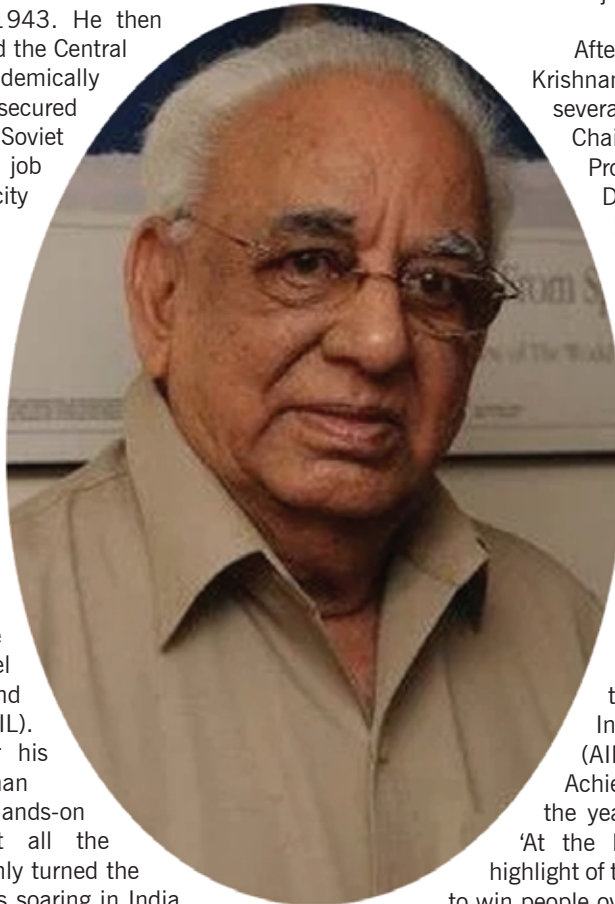
A doyen of Indian industry who earned the sobriquet 'Father of PSUs' for his adroit steering of ailing behemoths, Venkataraman Krishnamurthy was born on 14 January 1925 in Karuvally, a hamlet in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. After his schooling, he enrolled for a three-year diploma in Electrical Engineering in the CNT Technical Institute and completed the course in 1943. He then appeared for the UPSC and joined the Central Engineering Services. Academically inclined, Krishnamurthy secured Doctorate in Economics from the Soviet Academy of Sciences. His first job was with the Madras Electricity Board.

His administrative acumen and skill caught the attention of the central government and he was appointed the Chairman of the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) which was then in a bad shape. Krishnamurthy was instrumental in turning around the PSU and later he became the founder Chairman of Maruti Udyog. Among his other assignments was the Chairmanship of PSUs like Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) and Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL). Krishnamurthy brought to bear his innate skill and his expertise in management as well. A hands-on professional, he ensured that all the companies that he headed not only turned the corner but also found their profits soaring in India and abroad.

Krishnamurthy had the unique distinction of serving under five Prime Ministers, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Rajiv Gandhi and Dr Manmohan Singh and shared a close rapport with them. This ensured that he got a free hand in the shaping of policies. It played a key role in all his pursuits. Krishnamurthy would later essay several roles which he would accomplish with distinction. He was appointed Chairman of the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore and Ahmedabad and the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and the St. Xavier's Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar.

He also headed the Centre of Development, Hyderabad, Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Centre and was Member of the Government's Advisory Council from 2001-2008. He was also a Member of

the Planning Commission and a Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Industry. Krishnamurthy also served as Chairman of the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council with a Cabinet rank up to 2014. A close associate of the late Rajiv Gandhi, Krishnamurthy was one of the founding trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.



After his association with the PSUs, Krishnamurthy found his hands full with several assignments and was also chosen Chairman of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled people and also headed the Bharathidasan Institute of Management and served as Vice Chancellor of the Bharathidasan University.

A number of awards and honours came the way of the competent technocrat. The Government of India bestowed the Padma Shri on him in 1973, the Padma Bhushan in 1986 and India's second highest civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan in 2007. All the three awards under the Civil Services category bore a testimony to his sterling contributions. The All India Management Association (AIMA) conferred on him a Lifetime Achievement Award for Management in the year 2005. Krishnamurthy's memoir 'At the helm' was a bestseller and the highlight of the autobiography were handy hints to win people over and take them along which in a nutshell was also his philosophy in life.

Dr Krishnamurthy passed away on 26 June 2022 at 97. Even in his nineties, VK as he was known among his peers and friends, was keenly involved in issues relating to engineering, technology, management, production and development. Handsome tributes were paid to his memory by a host of leaders including former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, during whose tenure in office, Krishnamurthy remained a close associate in shaping governmental policies. Krishnamurthy's contributions to the growth and development of Indian industry should ensure for him a high ranking among the builders of modern India.

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KRISHNA KUMAR (KK) (1968-2022)

A voice for all seasons

Krishnakumar Kunnath, nee KK, was a playback singer in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odiya, Bengali, Assamese, and Gujarati languages. His soulful, smooth voice captivated audiences for over two decades.

Born in Trichur and brought up in Delhi to Malayali parents, he graduated from Kirori Mal College, Delhi, and then sold typewriters before pursuing his passion for music. Though not formally trained in music, KK was born into a musical family.

A family man, he fiercely protected his privacy. Media shy, one hardly saw his photos in the media.

Moving to Mumbai in 1994, KK initially performed in hotels for a living. But his *swadharma* lay in a parallel universe--in chords and beats; melodies and lyrics; lights, sounds, and performances. He started as a jingle singer when he presented his demo tapes to Louis Banks, Ranjit Barot, and Leslie Lewis in 1994 and finally secured a break from the UTV Media when he voiced a one-minute jingle for Santogen Suitings.

Soon with 3,500 jingles in eleven Indian languages under his belt, which included Yo Frooti and Pepsi's Yeh Dil Mange More, Colgate Gel, Nerolac Paint, Hero Honda, Double mint chewing gum, etc., he also lent his voice to the song 'Josh of India' during the 1999 Cricket World Cup.

The same year, he released his first album, *Pal*. The melodious pop-rock songs *Aap Ki Dua*, *Yaaron* and the title track *Pal* were instant hits and got him The Star Screen Award for Best Solo Record in the Non-Film Music category. His second solo album, *Humsafar*, in 2008 gave huge hits including, *Aasman Ke*, *Dekho Na*, *Yeh Kahan Mil Gaye Hum* and *Rain Bhari Kaari*.

He then transitioned into a playback singer, starting with dubbing for A.R. Rahman's *Kalluri Saaley* and *Hello Dr.* from Kadir's 'Kadhal Desam' and then *Strawberry Kannae* for AVM Production's 1997 Tamil musical film 'Minsara Kanavu'.

Collaborating with Tamil music directors Harris Jayaraj and Yuvan Shankar Raja and others, he released successful songs linked with Tamil pop culture in the 2000s. In 2004, his Tamil song *Appadi Podu* became popular pan India. Though a Malayali, sadly he sang only one Malayalam song *Rahasyamay* from Puthiya Mukham (2009).



Chhod Aaye Hum Woh Galiya from 'Maachis' (1996) gave him his first Bollywood playback singer break. He later shot to fame with the chartbuster song *Tadap Tadap* from the film *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*. In 2001, Shankar Mahadevan, Shaan, and KK collaboratively voiced the crowd-puller song *Koi Kahe Kehta Rahe*, for the film *Dil Chahta Hai*.

Then came numerous hit songs like *Such Keh Raha Hai* from *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein*, *Zara Sa* and *Dil Ibaadat* from *Jannat*, and *Piya Aaye Na* from *Aashiqui 2*. His other popular songs included *Dola Re Dola*, *Kya Mujhe Pyaar Hai*, *Aankhon Mein Teri*, *Khuda Jane*, *Piya Aaye Na*, *Mat Aazma Re*, *India Wale*, *Tu Jo Mila*, *Zara Sa*, *Dus Bahane*, *Pyaar Ke Pal*, *Zindagi Do Pal Ki*, *Tu Hi Meri Shab Hai*, *Hum Rahe Ya Na Rahe Kal*, *Tune Maari Entriyaan*, etc.

He also gave his voice to title songs of various Indian TV shows and also appeared as a judge and jury member in many music talent shows. In 2009, he won the Screen Awards, Best Playback Singer - Male for his song *Khuda Jaane* for the film *Bachna Ae Haseeno*; National Award for *Tu Aashiqui Hai* from the film *Jhankaar Beats* in 2003, etc. He also received six Filmfare Award nominations.

On 31 May 2022, KK performed at an overcrowded live music concert in the Gurudas College festival at Nazrul Mancha auditorium, in South Kolkata. Returning to his hotel he died of a cardiac arrest, aged just 53. He was cremated in Mumbai and is survived by his wife Jyothy Krishna, son Nakul and daughter Taamara.

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MAJOR RAJIV KUMAR JOON, AC, SC (1969- 1994)

Hero of J&K encounter

Rajiv was born at Gaddi Kheri in Rohtak district on 5 December 1969 to Dharam Singh Joon and Shanti Devi. He was the eldest among six children. His father passed away in 1980 when he 11. The responsibility of raising the six children was shouldered by the mother Shanti Devi. As a child, Rajiv was fascinated by the soldierly aura of his “mausa ji” Brig. Kaptan Singh Kataria, and dreamt of following in his footsteps.

After his primary education, Rajiv joined Sainik School, Kunjpura (Karnal), where his inclination towards Army life got firmed up. After senior secondary, he went on to join the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, and was commissioned into 22 Grenadiers on 8 June 1991. While in the battalion, Rajiv soon evolved into a dedicated and committed soldier. Even as a subaltern, his bravery and combat skills were noticed by his seniors. The unit was into Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in September 1992. A year later, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

On 16 April 1994, Rajiv led his team of Ghataks and eliminated three hardcore militants in a fierce encounter; an act that won him Shaurya Chakra, the third highest military decoration during peace time. Rajiv's younger brother, Paramjit Joon comments “Rajiv bhaishahab, though a believer, was not too religious. His religion was his motherland, his Paltan and his jawans for whom he would sacrifice even his life.” The summary of the most conspicuous act of bravery by Major Joon is recorded in 22 Grenadiers War Diary.

The entire Kashmir Valley had become a hotbed of militancy by the time 22 Grenadiers was inducted into J&K in September 1992. On 16 September 1994, a search party under Major Rajiv Kumar Joon carried out cordon and search operation in village Arian Dassar in district Anantnag. Major Rajiv Kumar Joon discovered two militants hiding inside a house in a wall between the door and the ceiling of the room. The hiding militants were persuaded to come out but instead they fired indiscriminately at the search party located at the doorway, injuring a member.

Realising the gravity of the situation, Major Joon ordered his party to cover his move while he closed onto the hideout, crawling under the terrorists' fire. The trapped militants jumped into the basement of the house and brought heavy fire on the search party from an opening. Major

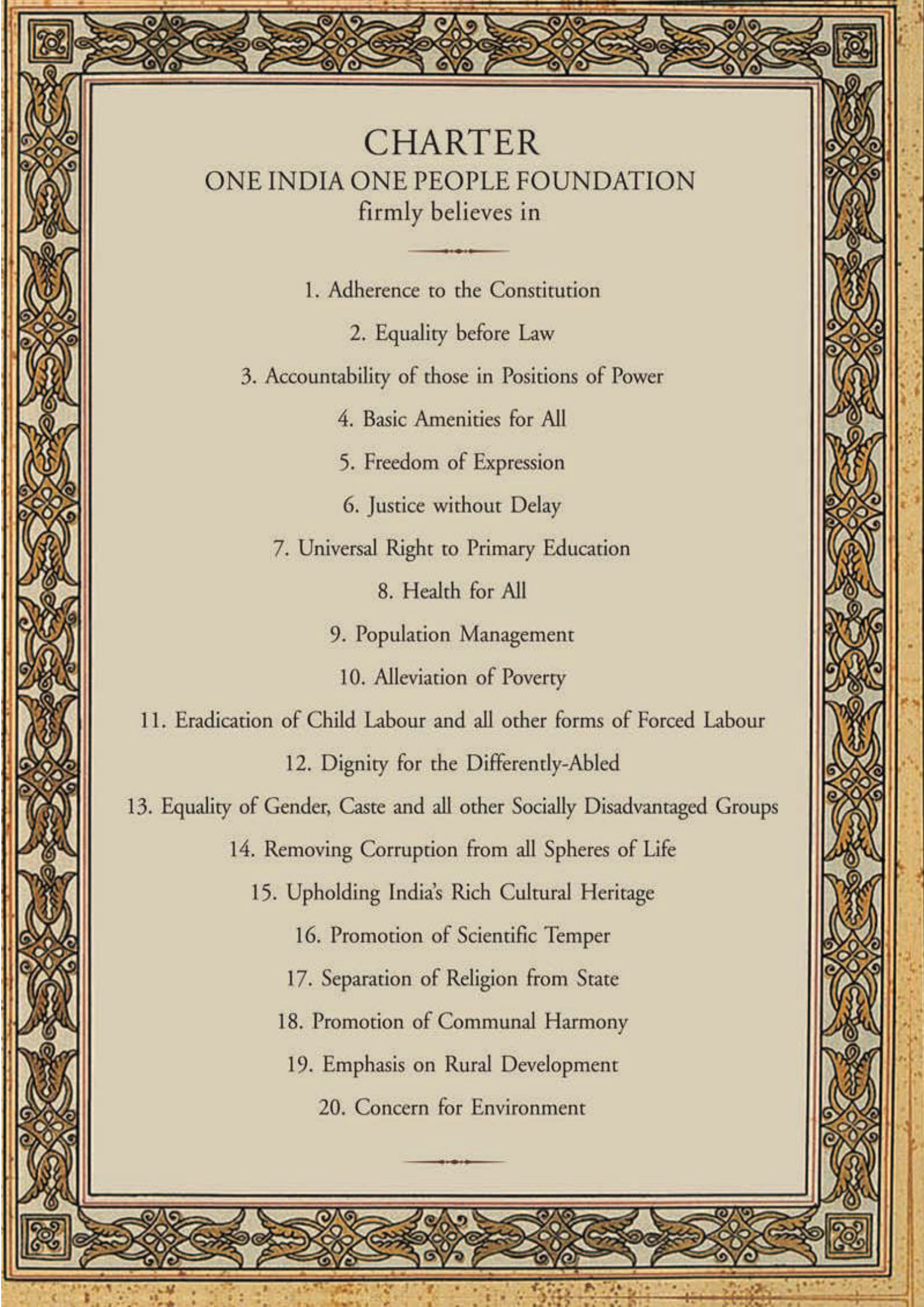
Rajiv Kumar Joon, sensing that his comrades could not engage the well-entrenched militants from their location, crawled up to the loophole on the outer side of the basement at his own risk, lobbed two hand grenades into the loophole, and fired into it killing one hard core Pakistan trained militant. The other militant continued firing from the corner of the basement with renewed vigour.

Major Rajiv Kumar Joon, grievously wounded and profusely bleeding, refused to move back and sprayed bullets all over the basement killing the militant. In this act of extreme courage, he single-handedly killed both the armed militants saving the lives of his comrades. The two killed militants were later identified as self-styled commander of Hizbul Mujahideen. Two AK 56 rifles with three magazines AK 56 and 22 rounds of ammunition were also recovered in this operation. He breathed his last while being evacuated to the Base Hospital.

Major Rajiv Kumar Joon, thus displayed conspicuous courage and gallantry of the highest order. He was posthumously awarded the Ashok Chakra, the highest peacetime military decoration in India, for this most conspicuous act of bravery.

A housing project to provide affordable housing to serving and retired army men has been named in the memory of Late Major Rajiv Kumar Joon. On the occasion, his brother Paramjit Singh Joon was felicitated by the Chief Minister of Haryana.

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



CHARTER

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 2. Equality before Law
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 6. Justice without Delay
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 18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
 19. Emphasis on Rural Development
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WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)
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