

The background of the entire page is a painting. It depicts a historical scene, possibly a market or a public square. In the background, there is a large, prominent red dome, likely a mosque or a significant religious building. The sky is a mix of muted greens and yellows. In the foreground, several figures are visible, some on horseback and some on foot, engaged in what appears to be a transaction or a public activity. The style is somewhat impressionistic and historical.

# Historacle

NOV 2023 | VOL. 4

## INDIAN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

From the Battle of Plassey to the Naxalites, learn more about our 200-year long freedom struggle

Collective heroism, non-violent resistance,  
armed protests, unity, partition, strife,  
sacrifice. This magazine will expatiate on the  
Indian Independence Struggle.

*Swaraj is my birthright,  
and I shall have it.*

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak

## FOREWORD

Congratulations to our new team of Historacle!

I am extremely proud and happy that the legacy has been passed on to the right hands, headed by Akshit Jain and his team - Dia Bagla, Anvi Chopra, Anoushka Awasthi, Aditya Gupta and Aadhavan Balachandran to carry forward the light of Historacle. I can imagine how much hard work the team has put into organising this wonderful third edition. At this juncture, I thank immensely Devna Aggarwal, founder and the first Editor-in-Chief of Historacle for her initiative.

I record my gratitude to all the remarkable articles written by our young talents - Aadhavan Balachandran, Rishyendra Sai Ponnampalath, Avi Konduri, Dhrithi Siddhavaram, Rishab Rajaram, Aarav Batra, Dia Bagla, Akshit Jain and Kanav Baid. The quality of the content in all the contributions is very high and motivating. From 'African Dictatorships' to 'The India and Africa: a historical tryst with destiny' is of worth reading. Being part of the magazine, I am sure it broaden your horizon of knowledge.

The scope of History is wide and long, during the course of centuries it became the universal history of mankind. It starts with the past, makes the present its sheet anchor and points to the future. Events like wars, revolutions, the rise and fall of empires, fortunes, and misfortunes of great empires – builders as well as masses, in general, are all the subject matter of History. History is a comprehensive subject. Today, we hear of 'History of Civilization', 'History of Literature', 'History of Art', 'History of Geography', 'History of Mathematics', 'History of Physics', 'History of Chemistry', 'History of Religion', 'History of Space Exploration' etc., - in fact, history of any and every social, physical, and natural science we are interested in. History today has become an all-embracing, comprehensive subject with almost limitless extent. This is why JB Bury declared, "History is a science no more and no less".

Thus, I appreciate the sincere efforts made by Akshit Jain and his team to further popularise the subject of History among our young minds at TISB. Keep up the Good work!

Best Wishes  
Mr Vijaykumar Chellappan  
Mentor

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Fourth Volume of Historacle: The Indian Independence Struggle.

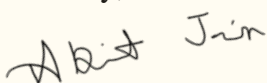
I am delighted that the third volume, Africa, was a success. There are many to whom I must express my gratitude: our mentor, Mr Vijaykumar Chellappan, my team, and all our columnists.

I never had the chance to learn Indian history, because I have constantly shifted between boards. Naïve me did not think it would add much value to my knowledge anyway. Until a few months ago when I sat with my great-grandmother, 97. She was visiting us after a long time, and as someone nearly 1/6th her age would almost instinctively do, I asked her about her childhood. She said, "लाहौर तो बहुत खुबसूरत था। मुझे उसकी याद मत दिला, आँखों में आँसू आते हैं।" (Lahore was really beautiful. Don't even remind me of it. I start to tear up.) Frankly, I felt ashamed about how little I knew about our past – it matters where I come from. Only if we understand our roots, can we embrace our authentic selves. I have since numerous books on Indian history (there is a Recommended Books section at the end of this magazine). Today, because of my conversations with my great-grandmother I know, I still have an ancestral home in Ravi Road, Lahore. One day, I will visit it.

I ask you to tread a prudent line while reading and evaluating each article. We have tried to shed light on freedom fighters, who have, perhaps, not received the recognition they merit. Our contributors have taken measures to preclude inflating/dilating the extent of the impact certain individuals made. But the matter of this magazine can still evoke a nationalism capable of affecting how you conceive current diplomacy and relations. Remember, today the British are not directly culpable nor responsible for the actions of their forefathers.

In this edition, we have compiled for you nine riveting articles that describe the anachronistic, 'ordained by God', constantly renegeing authority our ancestors were subject to, and how inspired men and women, some polarising, lead us through the dark times of the past. We encourage you to share your thoughts and feedback with us. Our team is already working towards the incoming edition of the magazine. I would like to invite you to share your perspectives. For the same, please contact me at [jakshit@tisb.ac.in](mailto:jakshit@tisb.ac.in), and I will be glad to assist you.

Sincerely,



Editor-in-Cheif



Akshit before handing out the 3rd edition of Historacle: Africa

3rd August 2023



History trip to Germany & Poland

June 2023

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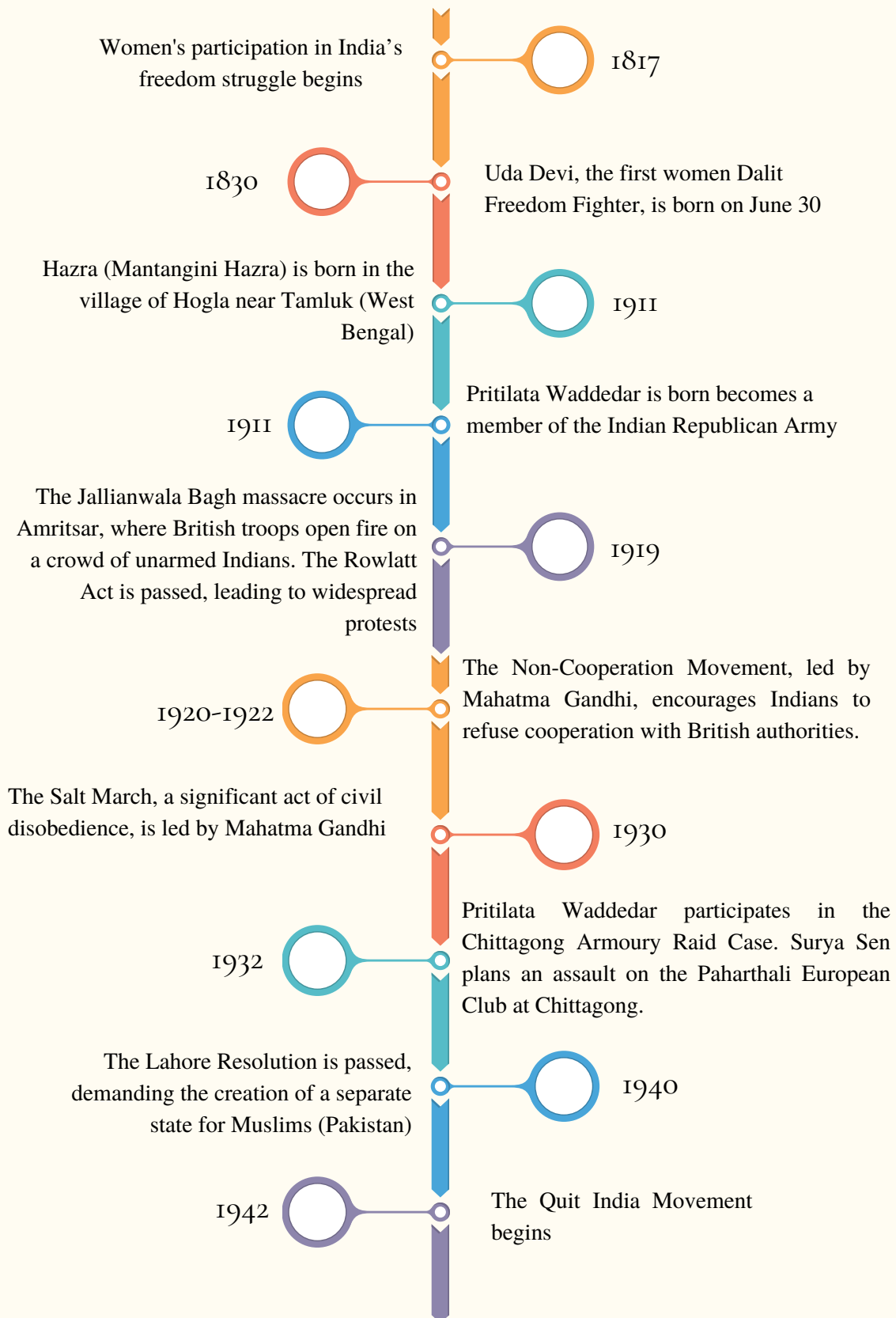


# Vol. 4: The Indian Independence Struggle

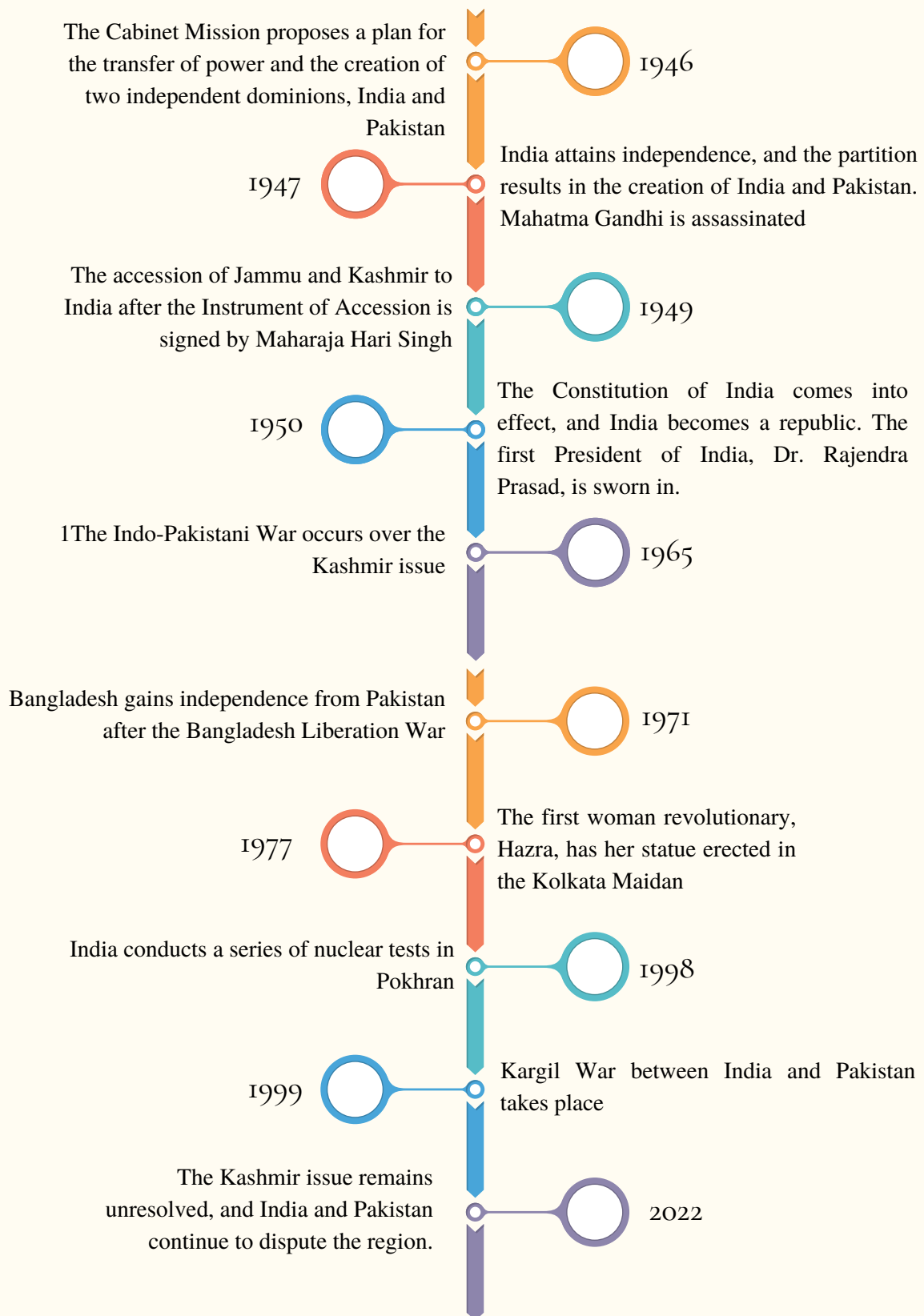
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## TIMELINE:



# INDIAN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE



# FROM HAGIOGRAPHIES TO THE EMBODIMENT OF SATAN, WHAT IS THE CORRECT WAY TO DESCRIBE VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR?

*by Akshit Jain*

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Hindutva \ हिंदुत्व \ noun

1. The political ideology and belief of establishing Hindu hegemony within India.
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A precursor: this article does not culminate with which is the appropriate label/description of 'Veer' Savarkar; instead, this piece provides an overview of Savarkar's life, the transformation of his character, and his lasting impact on India today. Enduring a painstaking plunge into all available material on this persona, author Vikram Sampath has compiled a mammoth 1600-page recount of Savarkar's life. In this 2-part book, Savarkar, Vikram Sampath, who has possibly performed the most comprehensive autobiographical study on him whilst "stripping off any personal biases, (so that) the records must be allowed to speak for themselves", has not adopted a definitive lexicon to describe this character. The book, however, has been critiqued to be "sympathetic" by left-wing thinkers and politicians today. Thus, I leave this piece open to you to be the judge of this individual. Remember: the scope of your judgement lies not on two poles but across a spectrum, so your conclusion must be based on adequate knowledge of this matter and also

be fluid.

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Vinayak Savarkar (1883-1966) is a polarising figure. Some of you may have not even heard of him. He has been dislodged from history books and had his bust removed and reinstalled numerous times in the Andamans. Contrarily, he has airports and train stations named in his tribute and today millions follow his doctrine of Hindutva. Without a doubt, though, he is an exceptional figure, and it is crucial to understand why.

Savarkar was born in a village called Bhagur in the Bombay Presidency. Vinayak's mother died when he was very young. His dad during his adolescence. He was an orphan by 14 and left to take care of his younger brother. His dad, a landowner, was an avid reader who amassed a collection of books in Marathi and English on spiritualism and Indian history. It is noteworthy that the 'history' inscribed in these texts characteristically deviated from historical truth and painted Hindus as the 'true' inhabitants of the subcontinent, who had been under a foreign yoke for centuries. Savarkar emulated his dad's passion for reading and was writing poems in Marathi by the age of nine. The undented conscience of a child was on display when he invited gardeners to have

mangoes and drink water on his patio because it was too hot. He was just nine then. The gardeners were flummoxed - no one of a higher caste had given them such an opportunity. They still listened to their master, although they feared they would bear the brunt of the repercussions if Vinayak's family got to know.



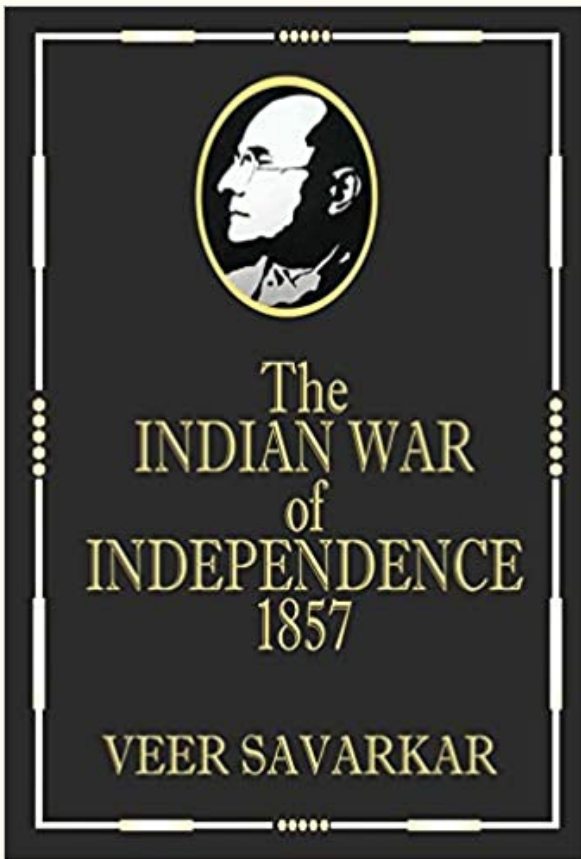
*Savarkar in his late 50s.*

The patriotic ardour imbued in Veer was evident by the effervescent speeches he gave and the jingoist writing he did at a young age. The matter articulated to the public had few hints of Hindu nationalism at this time but celebrated Indian revolutionaries of the Sepoy Mutiny (which he later rebranded The First Indian War of Independence in a book he wrote to honour the heroes of the uprising during his time in London). His parents were deeply concerned about his safety and attempted to steer his career on an alternate path. This only made his cause more resolute.

Vinayak recorded an anecdote in his earlier writings. He had heard rumours that some classmates of the Islamic faith had defamed a wall in a temple he frequented. Enraged by this sacrilege, he rallied his Hindu classmates. Vinayak and his accomplices broke the lock of a mosque one evening; they failed to break the qabba, but they did put the entrance on fire.

It must be pointed though that islamophobia was not firmly ingrained in his character until he was imprisoned at the Kala Pani Jail, or Cellular Jail, in Port Blair in 1923. Kali Pani represents the proscription of the over-reaching seas in Hinduism. He had once admired the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, showering him with poetic lyrics for his bravery in combating the British in his encyclopaedic book, *Freedom Struggle of 1857* (1857che Swatantrya Samar). In this book, he even emphatically claimed that Indians must preserve the spirit of unity between Hindus and Muslims. Again, his time in London illustrated him as a relatively liberal individual, a devotee of Hinduism, but an acceptor of all Indians irrespective of religion or caste.

Savarkar came to England following his marriage on a scholarship arranged by a fellow patriot Shyamaji Krishnavarma, under the aegis of Lokamanya Tilak. Tilak wrote in his recommendation to Shyamaji Kaka about Vinayak, "He is the greatest nationalist of our age... A young man who can fire up a crowd with his poetry imbued with nationalist pride." The sponsorship of his law degree was on the condition that Savarkar would not join the



ICS (Indian Civil Service) or assist the British in any governmental matters. He lived for four years in the India House, a student residence subsidised by Shyamaji Kaka, to promote nationalist ideas among Indians. The patriotic ardour he resonated with served as a mechanism of leadership. He instilled the values of the Abhinav Bharat Society he had founded with his brother Ganesh in 1904 into the India House in Cromwell Avenue, London. Illicit congregations to discuss the future of Independent India, unlawful diffusion of flyers, and dissemination of sensitive information gathered from spies who had infiltrated the government and police - India House was subject to endless scrutiny by Scotland Yard. Nothing substantial was assembled for a case against Savarkar until

1909; peculiarly, he had allegedly violated laws not in Britain, but in British India. Though the charges against him were feeble, the prosecutors were confident the partisan judge and jury would rule in their favour.

His approach to achieving purna swaraj, however, is divisive. Its tenability is determined by its effectiveness. An example is the murder of British Indian official Curzon Wylie. Savarkar recounts in a book published later in his life grooming Madan Lal Dhingra implicitly for this purpose. He sowed the seeds of motives in Dhingra but never explicitly instructed him. Dhingra had close ties with India House and The Indian Sociologist. Dhingra fired at Curzon Wylie with a revolver nine times, killing him.



*Dhingra's portrait at India House, London, 1908.*

Viceroy Minto was horrified by this "tragedy" and accelerated the ratification of the Minto-Morley Reforms, which entrenched communalism more deeply in the Indian public. Raids tacitly ordered by Savarkar on British officials (and Indians serving the British) became common after all charges against him were dropped in 1937. The rationale behind Vinayak's acquittal was to quell an end to the violence to initiate the provincial autonomy of states and simultaneously the formation of Legislative Assemblies.

Back in India, Savarkar was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans. The Cellular Jail was notorious for its treatment of freedom fighters transformed his character. One could not escape from the jail: it was surrounded by the sea, and in the forest, the tribals were cannibals. Hence, Kala Pani. Below is an excerpt from the Hindustan Times outlining the horrors of the jail:

*"After six hours of tortuous work under the fierce Indian sun, Sushil Dasgupta's hands were covered in his own blood; his body exhausted from the relentless and monotonous motion of pounding coconuts to produce a backbreaking quota of fibre. His throat was bone dry. He stopped to ask the guard on duty for a cup of water but instead the overseer raised his whip, bringing it down over and over with a torrent of abuse."*

Sushil was a member of the political activist group in Calcutta known as the Jugantar Party whose cause was an independent India.



*Pictures I took in Kala Pani, 2023. Top - Savarkar's cell. Bottom - entrance to the central watch tower.*

Considering the horrible condition of the jail and the heinous crimes committed against the 'criminals', the imprisoned were repatriated to the mainland but still were under sentence. Savarkar's time at the jail had a transformative effect on him. In 1923 he wrote a book in Marathi, *Hindutva*, during his days at Ratnagiri jail in which he implicitly suggested that the nemesis of India was not the British but Indian Muslims. *Hindutva*, a doctrine, became the foundation of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) eventually.

By engendering fomentation and hence creating communalism, Savarkar played a tremendous role, concurrently, making the task of the unification of the subcontinent more arduous for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. When it became clear that the British were determined to quit India, several princely states actively demanded that they be made independent nations. In 1946-1947, the Travancore king and his dewan, Sir C.P. Aiyar were pushing for an independent Travancore state and were even willing to offer their Thorium deposits to the British and Americans to win their support. The US did not respond, but backing for the king's secessionism came from Savarkar. Vikram Sampat explains, "Here, Savarkar's ill-advised support to the dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Iyer, who was planning to declare autonomy and independence of the Hindu princely state was unfortunate and detrimental to the integration process of the new Indian Union." With the Kashmir case, he mentioned, "We always wanted Kashmir to exist as an independent Hindu Rashtra i.e., an independent and sovereign Hindu nation."

Savarkar had grown to dislike Gandhi and his methods from their first encounter at India House. Following his release from prison, diatribes against Gandhi to malign his image were standard from Savarkar and his accomplices - when Savarkar called for revolution, he only divided people further. Thus, many accept today that either must be denounced to express respect to the other. He extended his mudslinging in a polemic entitled *Confused Gandhi*, in which he wrote things like, "...confusion wreaked by Gandhi" and accused him of being a "...traitor of the Hindu Rashtra".

Veer Savarkar's purported involvement in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi remains a contentious and debated topic. While some historical accounts hint at a possible connection, others assert Savarkar's innocence. Allegations suggest that Savarkar's incendiary speeches and writings may have influenced Nathuram Godse, the assassin. However, it is crucial to approach this claim cautiously and rely on substantial evidence to conclude; there is no definitive link recognised by historians to date.

The RSS, a right-wing nationalist organization, promoted Hindu nationalism and aimed to cultivate a collective national identity rooted in Indian culture. While they refrained from direct political involvement, their efforts played a role in fostering a sense of unity among Hindus who were brought into the doctrine. Veer Savarkar advocated for armed resistance against British rule and propagated *Hindutva* ideology, which emphasized the cultural and historical



significance of Hinduism. Savarkar's ideology and methods were met with both support and criticism, and his role in the independence movement remains a subject of debate.

Sure, his role was eventually negligent in the partition directly. He still stirred up communalism that concretised the resoluteness of the RSS and the Muslim League in their respective cause. He impeded those who endeavoured to unite India. Had his parents succeeded in driving him towards an alternate career path, would we have achieved independence as soon as 1947? Would the partition have happened? Whether you malign him or celebrate him, Savarkar was, undoubtedly, a freedom fighter. But was he fighting for the freedom of India or Hindus?

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*The Hindu Fascist group RSS, the ideological manifestation of Savarkar, preparing for a march in 2018.*

# HOW DID POETRY INFLUENCE THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE?

by Rithika Nambiar

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patriot \ देशभक्ति \ noun

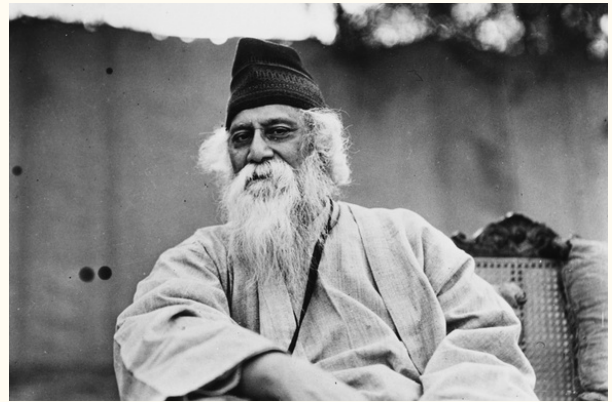
1. the quality of being patriotic;  
devotion to and vigorous support  
for one's country

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Political figures oftentimes don the appearance of writers and artists, penning stories that contain discrete portrayals of the society they live in, and the culture of Indian Independence is no different. Poets and writers of British India were immersed in the fluid of nationalism that the Indian public pursued. However, only limited attention is spotlighted on the Indians who used their pen as a weapon to fight censorship, question propaganda and advocate for freedom.

The influence of Indian writers in this era came from their capability to evoke and capture emotions from the general public. The Flag Song, written by Shyamlal Gupta, in March 1924, was penned in praise of the Indian tricolour. The poem commends the valour of Indian martyrs and promises a nation built on the foundation of honouring their sacrifices, instigating value and gratitude for those working to attain independence. Likewise, Pushpa ki Abhilasha (A Flower's Dream) written by Makhanlal Chaturvedi is another poem implying the Indian desire for

independence, where the poet expresses his feelings for his nation by personifying a flower. He claims that the only desire he has is to live in a future which values the sacrifice of 'our brave soldiers'. Moreover, patriotic poetry was crafted in multiple languages. Bengali works by Rabindranath Tagore, Malayalam works by Vallathol Narayana Menon and Gujarati and Sanskrit works by Harilal Dhruv, among several multilingual writers, accumulated together to transcend linguistic barriers and evoke patriotism.



*Rabindranath Tagore, date unknown*

The articulation of nationalist sentiments through poetry effectively inspired the public to fight for their self-determination. As writers perfectly encapsulated the emotions of the struggling Indian population, they amplified the voice of the general public - the work they produced has left an imprint in history, denoting the sentiments of nationalism,

resilience and hope that the Indian public represented at the time.

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# IDEOLOGIES OF A REVOLUTION

by Rishyendra Sai Ponnam

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socialism \ समाजवाद \ noun

1. a political and economic system that advocates for public ownership of property and resources

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The dawn of the 20th century marked a pivotal period in the history of India, as the fervent desire for independence from British colonial rule began to take root in the hearts and minds of its people. As the freedom struggle gained momentum, it became a melting pot of diverse ideologies, each contributing to the collective pursuit of a free and sovereign India. From Indian nationalism to socialism, from religious uprisings to revolutionary fervour, a myriad of ideological currents emerged, shaping the trajectory of the movement and the destiny of the nation. We shall explore the varied and intellectual perceptions of a multitude of individuals as they embark on their quest for one thing: independence.

The Indian National Congress (INC), founded in 1885, became the primary platform for Indian nationalist aspirations. Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak advocated for increased representation and gradual reforms within the British colonial system. During its early years, the INC predominantly consisted of leaders who advocated for a gradual and constitutional approach to address Indian

grievances. They sought to secure a greater say for Indians in the administration, an expanded role in policy-making, and socio-economic reforms to address poverty and inequality.



*First INC, 1885*

Religious nationalism found expression in the form of Hindu and Muslim leagues. The Hindu nationalist ideology, often associated with Hindutva, gained traction with leaders like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and it found its voice through organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha, founded by Savarkar in 1915. The Mahasabha advocated for the preservation of Hindu culture, traditions, and values, while also promoting the interests of the Hindu community. It emphasized the idea of Hindutva, which sought to unify Hindus and create a sense of pride in their religious and cultural heritage. Savarkar had great ties with the founders of the INC but as his ideas developed into a more radical approach, he strayed away from the initial goal that all of them had in common.



*Hindu Mahasabha, date unknown*

On the other hand, the All India Muslim League advocated for the rights and interests of Muslims. The All India Muslim League was founded in 1906 in Dhaka, with the goal of providing a platform for Muslims to voice their concerns and demands. The League initially sought to protect Muslim political and educational rights, emphasizing the need for separate electorates to ensure adequate Muslim representation in legislative bodies.

Under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, however, the Muslim League moved away from the advocacy of equal rights to the Islamic minority and demanded the creation of a separate Muslim-majority nation. Jinnah's skilful negotiations and unwavering commitment to the cause of a separate Muslim state were evident in the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The resolution, often referred to as the Pakistan Resolution, called for the creation of independent Muslim-majority states in the subcontinent. This landmark event marked a significant turning point in the League's objectives, with Jinnah leading the way towards the eventual creation of Pakistan.



*All India Muslim League, 1906*

The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909, was a significant political development during the Indian freedom struggle. It aimed to introduce limited electoral reforms and increase Indian representation in the legislative councils of British India. However, the reforms generated mixed reactions from both Hindus and Muslims, highlighting the complexities of Indian politics and the diverse aspirations of different communities. The new laws initiated a ray of hope amongst the Hindus as it seemed they could finally expand their representation, as the religious majority, and make valuable decisions that would shape their own future. Muslims on the other hand, saw this as a step away from their cultural identity and wants and as a minority at the time would have a smaller say in ideas that affected them as well.

Socialism and leftist ideologies found resonance among certain sections of Indian society during the freedom struggle. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were influenced by socialist principles and called for economic equality and social justice. Socialism first found its roots in India in 1871, when Lal Har Dayal first read Karl Marx's infamous book, "The Communist

Manifesto”. The socialist movement brought issues of economic inequality and social justice to the forefront of the struggle. It raised awareness about the exploitative nature of colonialism and highlighted the need for comprehensive reforms in an independent India. The socialist perspective emphasized the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities and uplifting the masses through inclusive policies and welfare measures. Extremely popular amongst the lower classes of the country, these leftists’ methodologies gathered the masses together on a united front requesting a fair country.

Despite the many people who favoured a peaceful approach through diplomatic talks and strikes, there were a few who thought the message could only be delivered through sheer violent acts that would leave them as martyrs. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1657 marked the beginning of such acts being carried out as people sought ways to bring the fight to the East India Company. At the forefront of the cause was the Hindustan Republican Association(HRA) which was founded in 1924 by Chandrashekar Azad and Sachindranath Sanyal. With them, the most famous event of the revolutionary struggle took place. On the 17th of December 1928, the group conspired to assassinate prime targets associated with a lathi charge on Lala Lajpat Raj by throwing a bomb inside the Central Legislative Assembly. Despite no one being killed and only a few sustaining minor injuries, Singh along with Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru, were taken in by the officials and hanged on the 23rd of March 1931. Historians argue as to whether to

classify such individuals as revolutionaries or as historian David Hardiman describes: “Terrorists”.



*Illustration of Bhagat Singh in a comic*

Indian nationalism was a clarion call for unity, transcending the barriers of language, religion, and social background. Indian nationalists passionately believed in the intrinsic value of their traditions, values, and customs, seeing them as the bedrock of their national identity. The movement fostered a deep sense of belonging and instilled in the Indian masses an impassioned desire to break free from the chains of British colonialism. It galvanized individuals from all walks of life, from intellectuals and leaders to the common people, who fought with unwavering

determination and sacrifice to secure the cherished goal of a free India. Indian nationalism became the lifeblood of the freedom struggle, propelling the nation forward on the path to independence and leaving an indestructible mark on the history and identity of India.

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# INDIA'S SECOND FREEDOM STRUGGLE: THE NAXALITES AND THE INDIAN REVOLUTION

by Aadhavan Balachandran

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naxalite \ नक्सलवाद \ noun

1. a member of a Maoist group in India that originated in 1967 in West Bengal

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## Foreword

*As a (grudgingly) regular contributor to this magazine, and by now a well-known political radical, many of our more seasoned readers will be expecting an unfairly sympathetic, if not outright Manichean portrayal of the Naxalites in this article. I implore such individuals to read the article before jumping to such conclusions.*

Most of us, if we know anything at all about the history of India, know that India won independence from its colonial masters on the 15th of August of 1947. Everyone, from the wealthiest merchants to the most destitute of peasants hoisted the national flag, sang patriotic slogans and delved together into the euphoria this newly found freedom had provided – India was finally free. Then, on the 16th, the peasants went back to their huts and the landlords to their palaces, and everything went on just as it had every day for the last few centuries.

This is, ostensibly, a magazine about history,

that claims to focus on events that, however obscure, happened in the past. However, if you, the reader, are somewhat aware of modern-day affairs, you would know the Naxalite movement is not history, and that thousands of fighters perpetuate the people's war in the jungles of Central India to this day. As recently as 2005, the then-prime minister of India called the Naxalite-Maoists the “most serious security threat to the country”, and the movement continues to attack the Indian government both politically and militarily. How then, can we refer to them as history, as mere footnotes in saffron-clad textbooks? The fact is, this is not a mere glossing over of a failed revolution-to-be, but an exploration of the beginnings of one of the few movements that could challenge the mighty Indian state. This was a beginning steeped in blood, violence and the countless atrocities inflicted on the masses, but equally one rife with passion, fervour and revolutionary optimism. This was the beginning of the Indian Revolution.





On the 5th of July 1967, an editorial was published in the People's Daily, the central organ of the Communist Party of China. It announced to the world that "the peal of spring thunder has crashed over the land of India", with "revolutionary peasants in the Darjeeling area having risen in rebellion" against their oppressive landlords. Led and supported by a faction of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the peasants redistributed land, fought off state police and punished several oppressive landlords. The uprising, while caused by the very real oppression and hardship faced by the Indian peasantry as a result of their exploitation, was also an answer to a question that had plagued the Indian communist movement for decades, - one of two different roads to socialism.

Only 3 years earlier, the Communist Party of India (CPI) split in two, with the renegade Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) emerging as a result of the CPI's decision to cooperate with the Indian National Congress at a governmental level. Several leaders, such as Kondapalli Seetharamiah, opposed the feudal-led reactionary Congress party, instead advocating for the Communists to viscerally oppose the Congress both electorally and on the ground. The newly-formed CPI(M) also consisted mostly of pro-China communists, who chose to side with Mao after the Sino-Soviet split. Leaders of the CPI(M) opposed the CPI's revisionism and class collaborationist ideology, instead offering a more revolutionary path to socialism in India similar to Mao's in China.

For all its talk of revolution, however, the

CPI(M) soon degenerated into electoralism itself. While formed as a more revolutionary, anti-revisionist communist party, the new leadership of the CPI(M) largely consisted of electoralist, revisionist leaders such as E.M.S. Namboodiripad. Soon, the CPI(M) would eclipse the CPI electorally, becoming India's largest communist party and forming state governments in Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal. When the peasant uprising in Naxalbari broke out in 1967, the state government was led by the CPI (M). Instead of supporting the peasants and their movement however, the CPI(M) led government unleashed horrific violence on the people through the use of state police, as well as their collaboration with central units. With this action, a left-wing faction of the CPI(M), led by Charu Majumdar, left the party, proclaiming that the time was ripe for armed struggle in the country. This faction would form the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR), later merging into the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (ML)).



*Naxalbari uprising 1967*

This organisation would go on to continue the armed struggle against the Indian government that first began in Naxalbari, adopting the Maoist strategy of People's War all across the country. However, after Majumdar's imprisonment and death and the hands of state security forces, the CPI(ML) would splinter into multiple groups, each professing to carry on the legacy of the original party. Indian security forces used this division to their advantage, with thousands across the country being accused of Naxalism and imprisoned, tortured, and often killed. The Naxalite movement began to diminish to being prominent in only a few regions, namely parts of Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) and Chhattisgarh. From its inception in Naxalbari to the late 1990s, the movement saw a decline, spurred by the heavy state repression that characterised the era. However, the movement saw a rejuvenation in the unification of the two leading Naxalite groups to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in the early 2000s. That, coupled with the near-victory of Maoists in neighbouring Nepal, brought new steam to the movement, with state forces responding with Operation Greenhunt in 2009, an offensive characterised by brutal violence against the mostly Adivasi residents of the Bastar area of Chhattisgarh, the state with the heaviest Maoist presence.

Today, the CPI (Maoist) still maintains an army composed of thousands of cadres, governing several villages in the so-called Red Corridor (Areas with the greatest Maoist presence) and continuing its struggle against the Indian state. While we may look at it as a mere relic of a different era, a movement



*Naxalite spread in India as of 2018*

without relevance in today's India, we forget that fundamentally, not much has changed since independence in 1947. The top 5% of Indians own over 60% of our country's wealth, and the landlords have either remained or been replaced by the capital-owning bourgeoisie, who often descend from the same land-owning classes that dominated the country. The electoralist CPI and CPI(M) have been reduced to mere appendages of the Indian state, which in turn represents the national ruling class, and serve as conduits for any revolutionary frustrations among the populace to be extinguished. The oppression of the poor, the lower castes and women at the hands of the state apparatus (The police, bureaucracy and armed forces) continues as it has before, and no elected government has made any meaningful difference in this hierarchy. India remains a poor country, one ruined further by the neoliberal policies of the 1990s that

destroyed whatever attempt at welfare the country made in the first few years after independence. To put it bluntly, the fabian, electoralist school of thought has failed our country and only enriched those in power.

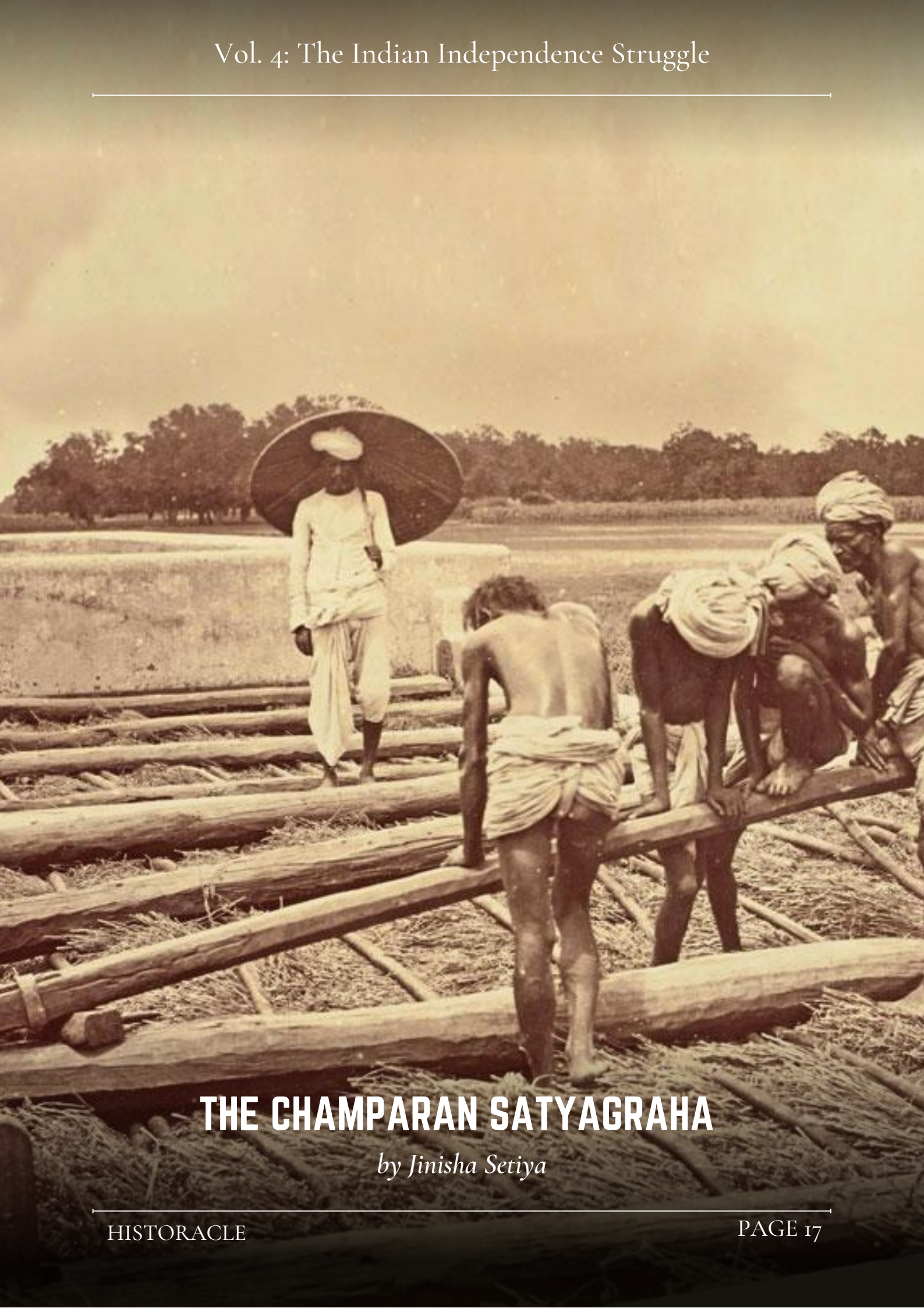


*CPI election campaign in Karol Bagh, Delhi, for the 1952 Indian general election*

The CPI (Maoist) may not be perfect or ideal, but its existence symbolises the need for radical change in India, the need to build a new system from the ground up that serves every citizen of this country, a need that the masses of this country have recognised and worked towards addressing through various struggles in our past. Instead of shrugging off this movement and ignoring its continued relevance in our society, we must recognise why it exists in the first place. We must work towards addressing those societal contradictions, and not be afraid of the radical change necessary to undertake it.

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# THE CHAMPARAN SATYAGRAHA

*by Jinisha Setiya*

Satyagraha \ सत्याग्रह \ noun

1. concept introduced in the early 20th century by Mahatma Gandhi to designate a determined but nonviolent resistance to evil
2. holding onto to the truth

An important turning point in the Indian independence movement, the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 demonstrated Gandhi's dedication to nonviolence and his capacity to inspire common people to fight for their rights. Numerous later movements in India's struggle for independence from British colonial authority were inspired by it.

The Champaran Satyagraha of 1917, which was Mahatma Gandhi's first satyagraha movement in British India, is regarded as a pivotal uprising in the history of the Indian independence movement. During the British colonial era, there was a farmer's uprising in the Champaran region of Bihar, in the Indian subcontinent. The farmers were indignant at being forced to cultivate indigo while receiving scant compensation. Raj Kumar Shukla, a local farmer and indigo tenant, played a crucial role in bringing Mahatma Gandhi to Champaran. Gandhi tried to employ the same strategies he had used in South Africa to organize mass uprisings by people to protest injustice when he returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and witnessed peasants in Northern India being oppressed by indigo planters.



*Champaran Satyagraha, 1917*

Many tenant farmers were required to grow some indigo on a section of their property as a requirement of their tenancy under legislation from the colonial era. This indigo was used to make an expensive dye. Since indigo was a cash crop, which required large amounts of water and frequently left the soil infertile, local farmers typically resisted its development and favoured growing crops that were more essential to everyday life, including rice and lentils.

The demand for indigo decreased because the Germans created a less expensive artificial dye. Some tenants increased their rent in exchange for being excused from indigo cultivation. However, when the German dye was no longer available due to World War I, indigo once again started to be profitable. As a result, the East India Company created laws intended to coerce farmers into growing indigo, frequently by making it a requirement for receiving loans and by working in concert with regional monarchs, nawabs, and landlords. Many Indian and European traders and trading firms prospered thanks to the lucrative trade.

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The first successful satyagraha movement was called Champaran Satyagraha. The Champaran Satyagraha gave direction to the youth and freedom movement in India, which was vacillating between moderates who favoured Indian inclusion in the British colonial system and the radicals from Bengal who favoured the use of force to overthrow British colonial control in India.



*Under British rule, farmers in Champaran were made to cultivate indigo on 3/20th of their land and the crop was bought at throwaway prices for textile mills in Britain*

Indigo marketers started pressuring farmers to raise production since the trade of Indian indigo to China was deemed illegal in the early 1900s and limited in the US in 1910. On April 10, 1917, Gandhi arrived in Champaran and stayed at Sant Raut's home in Amolwa village with a group of distinguished attorneys

including Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Mazharul Haque, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Babu Gaya Prasad Singh, Ramnavmi Prasad, and J.

After a few years, Gandhi organized a large group of his seasoned supporters and new volunteers from the area to open the first-ever basic school in the village of Barharwa Lakhansen. Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, and Babu Brajkishore Prasad, three of his personally chosen team of outstanding lawyers, organized a thorough investigation and survey of the villages, recording the atrocities and awful events of suffering as well as the general state of degraded living.

His primary assault happened after he was detained by police on April 16 on suspicion of inciting disturbance and told to leave the province. Gandhi meekly declined to submit to the order when requested by Magistrate George Chander at Motihari District Court on April 18 to provide security of Rs. 100. Outside the court, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated and rallied for his release, which the court reluctantly granted. The British Government later withdrew the case.



Gandhi also organized demonstrations and strikes against the landlords, who, under the direction of the British government, signed an agreement offering more compensation and authority over farming to the region's poor farmers and cancelling revenue hikes and collection until the famine was over. Sant Raut referred to Gandhi for the first time as "Bapu" during this movement.

According to Maude, a member of the Executive Council for the governments of Bihar and Orissa "consisting of almost all recommendations Gandhi Mission had made and it became the Champaran Agrarian Law (1918: Bihar and Orissa Act I)." David Arnold, one of Gandhi's biographers, claims that Gandhi "confused, angered, and divided the British in almost equal measure" and that they were "unsure whether he was, in their terms, a loyalist or a rebel."

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# THE PARTITION OF SOULS

by Navya Koura

*This stain-covered daybreak, this night-bitten dawn,*

*This is not that dawn of which there was expectation;*

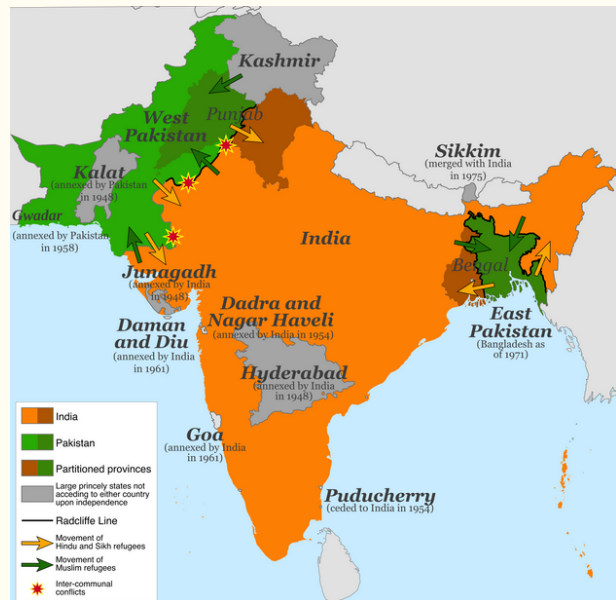
*This is not that dawn with longing for which; The friends set out, (convinced) that*

*somewhere there would be met with.*

Subh-e-Azadi (Dawn of Freedom – August 1947) by Faiz Ahmed Faiz on Indian Independence morning

On 18 July 1947, the India-Pakistan partition plan was approved by the king of Britain when he approved the India independence act. Before this, on 3rd June 1945 Louis Mountbatten announced it on the radio but gave little information of how it would happen exactly. Using outdated maps, inaccurate census numbers, and minimal knowledge of the land, in 5 weeks the boundary committee drew a border, dividing 3 provinces under direct British rule - Bengal, Punjab, and Assam. The border took into account where Hindus and Muslims were majority but also factors like location and population percentage. So if a Hindu majority area bordered another Hindu majority area it would be included in India but if a Muslim majority area bordered a Hindu majority area it might come under Pakistan. Princely states on the border had to choose which nation to join. Hence east and west Pakistan were carved out.

in 1971 East Pakistan seceded and became a new country like Bangladesh meanwhile the Hindu ruler of Kashmir decided to join India a decision that was to be finalized by a public referendum of the majority muslim population. The referendum still hasn't happened as of 2022 and India and Pakistan have been warring over Kashmir since 1947.



India, 1947

Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffer Khan, Clement Attlee (former prime minister of the UK), and Archibald Wavell (viceroy of India before Mountbatten) were against the partition of India.

## Debunking Myths

There is a very famous story about Jawaharlal Nehru, Edwina Mountbatten and Mohammad Ali Jinnah that gives a rather incredible reason



for the partition of India. All three of them studied at the same college in London: Harris College.

According to the story, the three of them were in a supposed love triangle and that is why Edwina Mountbatten requested her husband Louis Mountbatten to partition India into 2 countries so that both Jinnah and Nehru could become prime ministers. The reason posed by the story is far-fetched and unbelievable due to obvious reasons. On top of that, the huge age differences between the three of them everything doesn't seem to add up.

Most people think that the reason for the partition was that Hindus and Muslims couldn't co-exist. Their cultures were so different that historically they couldn't remain united. It was believed that Muslim rulers were demons and that Hindu kings were angels and the anti-parties fought among themselves. It was the greed for power and not religion that caused the battles in India.

A good example would be the battle of Haldighati. It was fought between the Rajputs and the Mughals. Though superficially it seems a battle between opposing religions it was not. The Rajput army of Maharana Pratap was led by Hakim Khan (a descendent of Sher Shah Suri and a Muslim) and the Mughal army of Akbar was led by Raja Maan Singh (a Hindu).

Between August 1947 and March 1948, 4.5 million Hindus and Sikhs were forced to migrate from Pakistan to India and 6 million Muslims fled Indian villages where their families had been living for centuries. A sum

of 10 million displaced and in the process 1 million dead.

In the background of partition, in the Hindu provinces like Uttar Pradesh the action of the congress incited fear in Muslims. They feared that the unfair and inhumane treatment under British rule would only worsen after the British departure. The cities of Lahore, Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka, and Karachi emptied of old residents and filled with refugees. The power vacuum created by the departure of the British caused massacres and violence. Women were assaulted and treated with disrespect "Men were not Men: they were predators"

When in 1947 clashes started to occur, families in which there were no patriarchs, women fearing for safety got their daughters married to save them from humiliation.

My great-grandmother just 16 years old was married to a man 20 years her senior, in a hurry. When they became a part of the exodus of people moving from newly formed Pakistan to India they were attacked by Muslim militants and robbed of their possessions with which they were trying to escape. Not satisfied with this, in their religious hatred they stabbed my great-grandfather with a poison-dipped dagger and dragged him away to be thrown in a quarry from where he was rescued by his brothers. He suffered from septicemia of the wound with great difficulty he recovered. They boarded the train to India and witnessed mass-scale murders and compartments filled with piles of dead bodies stacked on top of one

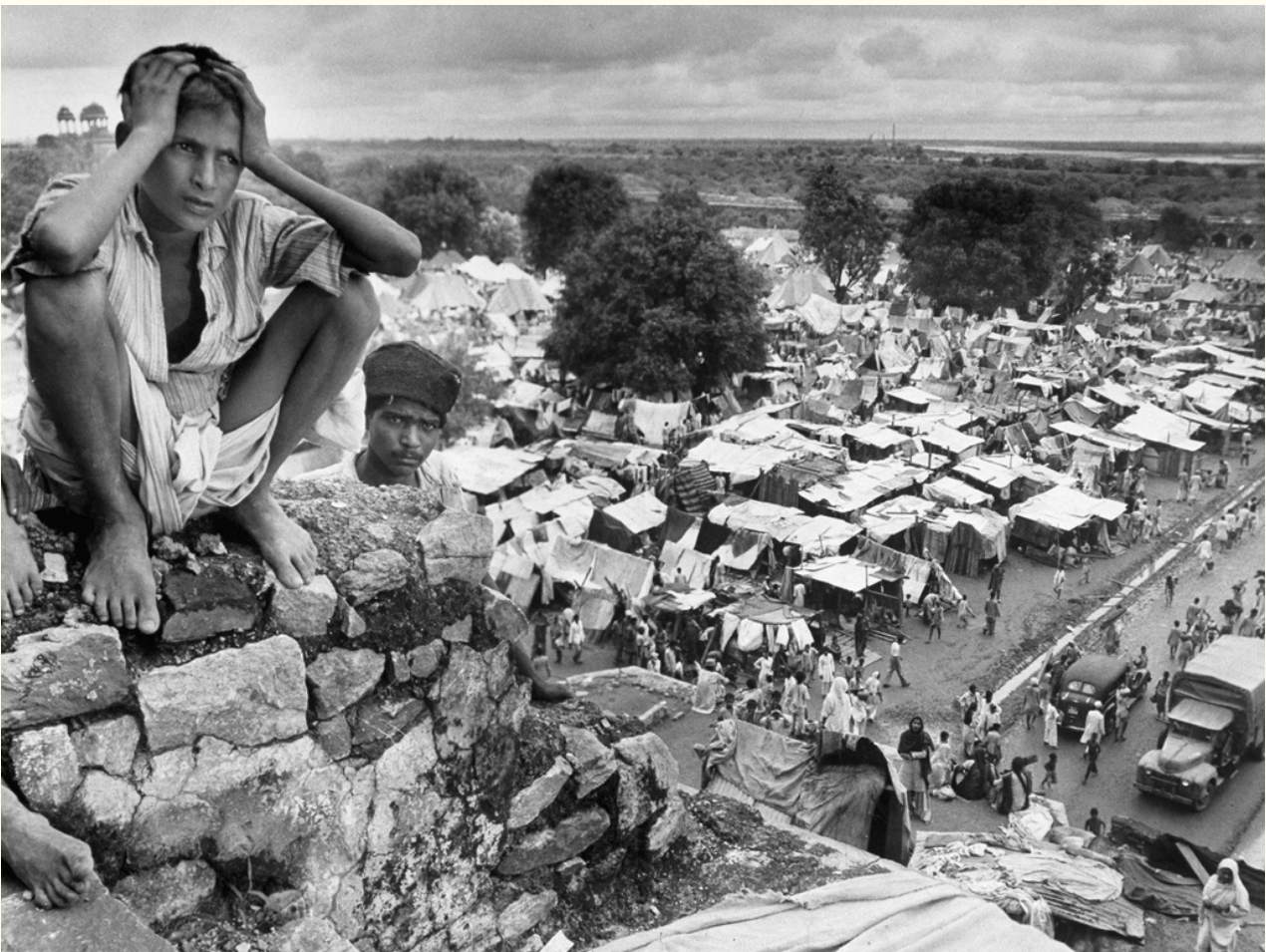
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another. They were hungry and their throats were parched. From inside the train, they heard voices travelling up and down the train they heard voices up and down the platform saying “Hindu paani” and from the other side “Muslim paani” apart from land and population even the water had been divided. It sends shivers down my spine when I imagine the terror of my great-grandmother, a 16-year-old child separated from her family and thrown into this human madness.

The partition of Indian soil was as bad as the

partition of Indian souls. More than 70 years later the memories of the partition remain fresh in the subcontinent with its new political formation and in memories of divided families and in the walls of abandoned mansions belonging to people who lost their homes and 7 decades later still dream of returning the place where their childhood memories brewed and still awaken with an avalanche of emotions of separation, estrangement, detachment, pain and longing in their hearts because blood stains aren't easy to remove.



The Great Divide displaced 15 million people and killed more than a million

years of trauma before and after the Malagasy uprising. Its inhabitants are descendants of those who took over their new surroundings and quickly adapted to what suits best. Those who struggled under colonial rule and fought back when they thought the time was right.

Madagascar stands as a vibrant and unique nation in the present day. While the country continues to face numerous challenges, such as economic development, political stability, and environmental preservation, it also possesses immense potential and remarkable cultural and natural diversity.

While challenges persist, Madagascar's trajectory holds promise. The nation possesses an abundance of natural resources, cultural wealth, and a resilient population committed to building a prosperous and sustainable future. Through continued investment, international cooperation, and responsible governance, Madagascar has the potential to overcome its challenges and emerge as a shining example of development, conservation, and cultural preservation. With concerted efforts, Madagascar can truly unlock its potential and become a beacon of progress in the African continent.

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# THE ROLE OF NORTH-EAST INDIA IN THE INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

*by Aditya Gupta*

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Silence. The north-east is unheard.  
Contribute. The north-east goes  
unsung.  
Violence. The north-east is silent  
once again.

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Inspired by the disconcerting tales of the violence in Manipur, this article was written to commemorate the untold role of the freedom fighters from the Northeast who demonstrated immense courage and commitment to the freedom struggle. This struggle, most notably in Assam, escalated post-1857 just like throughout the most of India.

Significant leaders include Paona Brajabashi, Bir Tikendrajit Singh, Rani Gaidinliu, and Haipou Jadonang from Manipur; U Tirot Sing Syiemlieh, U Kiang Nangbah, and Pa Togan Sangma from Meghalaya; Moje Riba, Matmur Jamoh, Lomlo Darang, and Bapok Jerangare from Arunachal Pradesh.

Many tribal communities in the North-East, such as the Nagas, Mizos and various groups in Assam had pre-established sets of traditions and systems of governance. The British attempt to challenge these traditions and

establish control over tribal land and resources was met with fierce resistance. This is particularly evidenced by several wars fought by the Ahom Kingdom against the British East India Company in the early 19th century. This struggle ultimately culminated in the illegal occupation of the territory through the Treaty of Yandabo between Burma and Britain.

Although, till 1926, the women of Assam were not organized at the provincial level, they contributed tremendously to the Indian Freedom Struggle through local associations or individually. Women took an active part in picketing in front of stores selling alcohol, opium, and imported products. Assam's Mukti Sangha, Assam Chatra Sanmilan, Assam Sahitya Sabha, and Assam Mahila Samiti were among the several organizations that contributed significantly to the Indian independence movement. One particularly notable freedom fighter was Kiran Bala Bora. Kiran Bala Bora and her active involvement in the Indian Freedom struggle was instigated by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. She led the boycott of imported goods and set a precedent by burning her own properties which were imported. She made her own garments, and openly criticized societal issues faced by women such as child marriage & sati. Kiran also went door to door among the Polaxoni villagers to promote the cause and recruit

participants.

Similarly, Bidyawati Gogoi was also a woman greatly inspired by Gandhian ideals of non-violent approaches to the freedom struggle. She led the participation in Gandhi's weaving and spinning programmes, processions, picketing and other organized activities. She was also key in leading the peasant opposition to the imposition of taxes and stamp charges. Additionally, her role was crucial was extremely important in getting the word out about the freedom struggle.

Gopinath Bordoloi, more commonly known as 'Lokapriya' (Beloved by the Masses), was key in the Quit India freedom movement, as a staunch supporter of Mahatma Gandhi's principles. He was also a key figure in the Assam region's politics during this period of history. After India's independence, he was elected as the first Chief Minister of Assam.

Tiêtrôkhâyô Khremba (Rani Gaidinliu) is regarded as a highly revered figure in her attempts to preserve and fight against the oppression of Naga culture. As a spiritual and political leader, she led the Naga revolution against the British in the Naga Hills and was imprisoned for 14 years for this crime. Her legacy in Nagaland is unparalleled for the immense bravery demonstrated by her.

Kanaklata Barua, one of the youngest activists from the North East, and his story is by far one of the most heart-wrenching. His struggles and fights for the freedom of India unfortunately culminated in his martyrdom at the extremely young age of 17 while he was

hoisting the Indian flag at a protest against British imperialism in India.

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# THE UNSUNG FEMALE HEROES OF OUR STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

by Dia Bagla

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Activism \ सक्रियतावाद \ noun

1. the action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change

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Saffron-strength & courage, white- peace & truth, green- fertility, growth and auspiciousness our flag holds true for our country and our people. As we celebrate 75 years of our independence with pride and honour, the sacrifices made by many to achieve this are still remembered and saluted. India needs to hold sacred its independence. For generations, the cloak of the British Rule that had grappled, sometimes with force, sometimes with injustice, the very essence of freedom that is the basic right of every individual citizen, was thrown over after many attempts. Hence, the Independence of this nation was won in ways and by its people in unprecedented ways.

Men of honour had a significant role to play in the freedom struggle. However, women too led from the front and emerged as game changers in the quest for independence. They played a pivotal role in achieving India's independence. However, their lives, struggles, and contributions to the movement are never recognized at the same level of prominence as that of the men of the movement.

Additionally, their names are seldom heard when discussing the independence movement or mentioned in brief. Women's participation in India's freedom struggle started as early as 1817. Throughout the twentieth century, numerous women continued to contribute to the movement through military leadership, political leadership, and social activism which shouldn't and can't be forgotten.

I

Pritilata Waddedar (5th May 1911 - 24th Sep 1932)



*Pritilata Waddedar contributed significantly to the freedom struggle. She was a member of the Indian Republican Army and took part in the Chittagong Armoury Raid Case.*

Born to a Bengali Brahmin family on 5th May 1911, she was a brilliant student and highly intellectual. During her education in college, she was much inspired by a freedom fighter named Ramkrishna Biswas, who was hanged later. She received various forms of combat training from Nirmal Sen, an influential member of the Indian Republic Army (1918) and also the younger brother of Surya Sen.

Masterda Surya Sen, a prominent Bengali Indian freedom fighter and leader of the anti-British freedom movement in Chittagong, Bengal, took notice and made her a member of his revolutionary group - The Indian Republic Army during the early 1930s. Under Surya Sen's guidance, Pritilata and her comrades organised several 'freedom' attacks in Bengal including the Jalalabad battle, thus creating panic among the colonial rulers and challenging their invincibility.

In 1932, Surya Sen, planned an assault on the Paharthali European Club at Chittagong, which bore the sign "Dogs and Indians are not allowed". This attack was planned on September 24, 1932.

He assigned leadership of this mission to Pritilata Waddedar, along with other young revolutionaries. The members of the team were instructed to take potassium cyanide with them so that they could swallow it in case they were caught by the British police. On the day of the attack, Pritilata dressed as a Punjabi male, reached the club around midnight and launched the attack. The raid was successful yet she she got trapped and

preferred swallowing the cyanide.

This definitely was the hallmark but also the courageous end of Preetilata's career, yet it set an example of selfless service for others to follow for years to come.

Pritilata Waddedar was the first woman to sacrifice herself in the anti-British movement and Bengal's first woman martyr. Such sacrifice for the motherland should not go in vain. Her act of courage and bravery, driven by the sheer determination to liberate the country from British hegemony, is part of our glorious history that must be upheld.

### II

Uda Devi "Dalit Veerangana" (30th Jun 1830 - Nov 1857)



*Humble background with no formal education, yet, at the age of 13, the heart of a hero. Ordinary to extraordinary.*

Born in Saran near Patna (Bihar). She started her fight for freedom at the mere age of 13. She was married to Phulendu Babu who was also a freedom fighter.

They joined the Quit India Movement of Gandhi Ji in 1942, they planned to raise the Indian flag on the roof of the Siwan Police Station. The newly married couple, Tara Rani and Phulendu not only managed to gather a crowd but also marched right in front raising anti-British slogans: Inquilab.

Phulendu lost his life in this rebellion yet Tara Rani remained composed and undeterred and continued her march to hoist the flag. She did not let her patriotism die with her husband. She against all odds and obstacles continued her freedom struggle till the very end, 15 August 1947, till India attained Independence. Tara Rani Srivastava, has a brave heart and a brave soul. She belongs to those group of women who were ordinary in all ways yet her actions were exemplary and nothing less than heroic. Her story is an example of true patriotism and pride. It is imperative we bring these faces out of the shadows and honour them, as they were definitely significant pillars of our freedom movement.

When they were marching towards them, the police opened fire Phulendu was hit and fell to the ground. Tara bandaged him with the help of her sari and continued to lead the crowd. Her husband died when Tara came

back but she continued to support the freedom struggle.

#### IV

Mantangini Hazara (1870-1942)



*Affectionately called Gandhi Buri (old lady Gandhi in Bengali)*

Born in the village of Hogla, near Tamluk (in the central state of West Bengal), in 1869, with no formal education, daughter of a poor peasant. She was married off young but became a widow at the age of 18.

In 1905, she actively became involved in the Indian independence struggle. She participated in the Non-cooperation movement in 1932 and was arrested many times for her contribution. Despite her incarceration numerous times her determination and patriotism remained resolute in her fight.

On 29 September 1942, 73-year-old Hazra led a large procession of around 6000 protestors,



*First women Dalit Freedom Fighter in the 1857 Uprising. Fierce Sniper of Modern India. 32 British soldiers were shot dead by her in the revolt.*

Yet again a courageous heroic lady whose contributions to the independence movement were glorious yet remains unnoticed.

Uda Devi is believed to be from Awadh (Oudh), situated in modern-day Uttar Pradesh. She was one of the first Dalit women to have participated in the Indian rebellion in 1857, famously known as the Sepoy Mutiny. She was also a member of the women's squad of Wajid Ali Shah, the sixth Nawab of Awadh. Witnessing the injustices and cruelty of the Britishers Uda Devi wanted to be a part of the independence movement and so approached Begum Hazrat Mahal wife of Wajid Ali Shah for military training.

Dauntless Uda Devi emerged as a fierce sniper and Begum Hazrat not only facilitated her military training but also helped her to form a woman's battalion. Later she married Makka Pasi who was a soldier in the Begum's army. Together these two became an integral part of their army.

Sikandar Bagh was a villa that was spread across 4.5 acres in Lucknow and was a fortified Mahal of Wajid Ali Shah. At the Battle of Sikandar Bagh in 1857, the fight between the British and the sepoys was immense. It is believed that there were around 2,000 sepoys including Makka Pasi, Uda Devi, and the women's regiment. The Indians

fought bravely and both sides suffered heavy losses. In this vehement encounter Makka Pasi, the husband of Uda Devi attained martyrdom. Her husband's loss did not deter Uda Devi rather inspired her to fight even more fiercely. She ordered her troops to attack from different sides of the British army. She herself climbed a tree, and shot relentlessly at the approaching British troops, till she was shot dead too. It is believed that when the body of this brave freedom fighter fell on the ground the British were amazed to see that it was a female who was fighting against them for her country. Even Captain Dawson and Quaker Wallace the British commanding officers paid respect to this lady who generated widespread fear among their troops which were armed with advanced guns and artillery.

In the battle of Sikandar Bagh all 2,000 Indian soldiers sacrificed their lives while the British lost 180 troops. The Pasi community in the Pilibhit (in modern-day Uttar Pradesh) region commemorates 16th November as the Martyrdom Day of Uda Devi, yet she remains to be unknown to most.

### III

Tara Rani Shrivastava



mostly women, to take over the Tamluk police station from British authorities. But the police opened fire in an attempt to stop the protest. Amidst the mayhem Gandhi Buri (Mantangini Hazra) was brazenly shot thrice yet she continued marching till she collapsed and died.

She was also the first woman revolutionary to have her statue erected in the Kolkata Maidan in 1977. There are several schools, neighbourhoods and roads, including a significant stretch called the Hazra Road in Kolkata named after her.

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Paying tribute to such heroes is imperative yet I feel knowing about them and their sacrifices is far more important. Statues are a symbol of their heroism, but it is their stories which ignite courage and pride in our hearts.

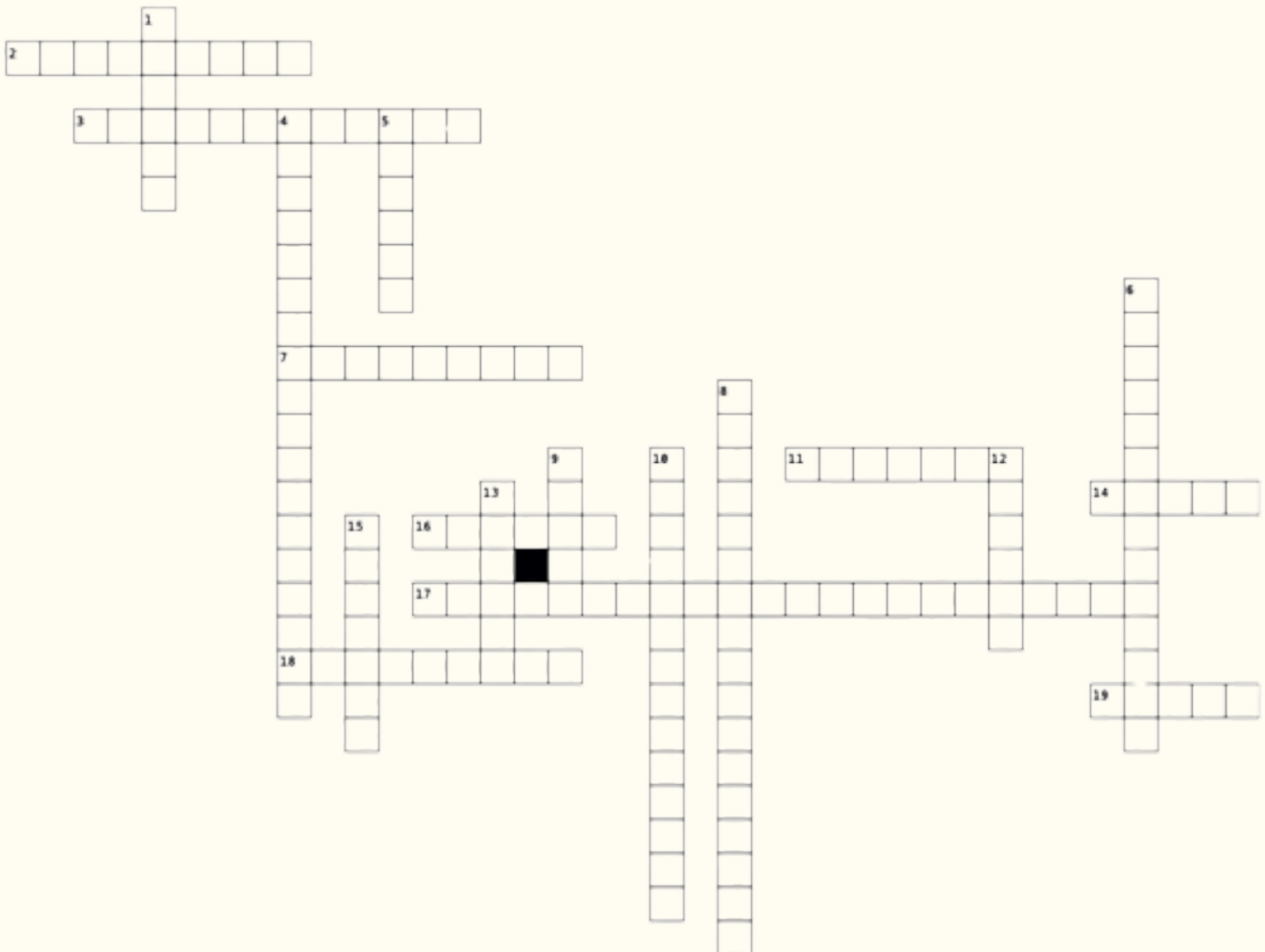
These are just a few unsung women freedom fighters but the list is endless. Each one of them was like the foundation stone, a pillar of strength without which 75 years of independence wouldn't be possible.

Jai Hind, Vande Matram!

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# CROSSWORD



### Across

2. A language family associated with Indus Valley Civilization, spoken in South India and Pakistan
3. What did Savarkar turn into after being imprisoned in Port Blair in 1923?
7. Pritilata Waddadar received combat training from \_\_\_\_
11. One of the first women to have participated in the Sepoy Mutiny
14. Which road was named after Tara Rani Shrivastava?
16. Site of the death village
17. What was formed in 1885?
18. He fought to save the lives of Jews in his workshop when executions began in 1941 in Germany
19. Where was the All India Muslim League founded in 1906?

### Down

1. The democratically elected leader of Germany in 1936
4. It called for the creation of independent Muslim-majority states under Jinnah
5. Site of Vinayak Savarkar's death
6. What did Savarkar form in 1915?
8. The largest Nazi concentration camp
9. Which dynasty had established a significant trading presence in East Africa by the 7th century AD?
10. Shyamlal Gupta wrote a song in 1924 to praise \_\_\_\_
12. The East India Company created laws intended to coerce farmers into growing \_\_\_\_
13. The Champaran Satyagraha was whose first satyagraha movement?
15. The language that Savarkar wrote poems in

\*Answers on page 45

# WHAT IF THE BRITISH HAD LOST THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY

*by Kanav Baid*

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Pacifism \ शांतिवाद \ noun

1. the belief that any violence, is unjustifiable and all disputes should be settled by peaceful means.

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It's 1757, a small village in Bengal. There, looking through a man-made ridge, the French commander Sinfray looks at the Bengali canons. He has put a protective cover over these cannons, fearing a thunderstorm. His men hurriedly put all the gunpowder in a safe space. Hours go by as the rain thunders. By morning the rain had all but vanished. Sinfray continued his barrage against the British. This goes on for hours on end, till both sides run out of ammunition. Then the commander of the Bengali army, Siraj Ud Daula orders his famed horse riders to charge to the British camp and orders a complete charge of his

forces. The damp weather and mist shield the British line of sight and the cavalry catches them by surprise. The British rush to man the ditch that they have created, but it's too late. The cavalry have reached and the battle is won. The French and Bengalis celebrate their victory and the defeated British have made serious concessions such as giving all trading rights to the French, including Calcutta and Madras as well as paying a huge sum of money.

It is difficult to imagine India without its colonial past. Most of modern India's constitution and governmental foundations come from the Brits, not to mention the social impact colonization had, the widespread use of the English Language, our modern-day rail network and transportation as well as the decline of practices such as Sati, female



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infanticide and child marriage were losing ground. This is the topic of today's alternate history, which is what would have happened if the British had lost the battle of Plassey.

The Battle of Plassey was a battle between the French and their allied Nawab of Bengal against the British. One major cause of the defeat of the Bengalis was the betrayal of Mir Jafar, an ally of the English, another cause was the rainstorm, which caused the allied (French and Bengali) cannons to be rendered useless as the gunpowder wouldn't work in a rainy atmosphere. The British however had arranged a protective layer above their cannons. All of this along with the confusion and lack of coordination from the Nawab's side and his being tricked by his generals to retreat back to his capital, caused a massive rout when the British opened fire, and with the retreat of Mir Jafar's army, the whole army ran away. In this alternate scenario, the French put a cover over their cannons and advise Siraj to stay in the battle. This would have completely changed the course of history.

Firstly, the French would gain Kolkata and Madras, 2 very important cities. The British would probably still hold on to Bombay, as it wasn't an important place yet. With the British gone, all the trade from India would go to the French, and while the East India Company was a private corporation, the Francis del Orientalis was mostly owned by the government so it would directly help the French Government.



*India map, 1765*

One major change would be no French Revolution, because the French Revolution happened partially due to the lack of funds available to the French monarchy. With the conquest of Bengal and most of India, which is one of the most wealthy regions in the world, it would supply France with almost limitless wealth. No French revolution would mean No Napoleon and that itself would have major repercussions. The Napoleonic wars would mean that the Church would be a much more important force in the politics of Europe, as well as the dissolution of the age-old tradition of the Holy Roman Empire, which paved the way for the unification of Germany by Prussia. Thus in this alternate timeline,

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ather than Prussia, it would probably be Austria unifying all of Germany. This would mean a completely different Germany. While Prussia was militaristic, masculine and authoritative, Austria was a pacifist country more inclined towards trade and commerce. The ideals of nationalism and how each ethnic group should have their own country led to the downfall of big empires and the rise of homogenous countries. Perhaps, in this alternate timeline, the Ottoman and Russian empires might not have fallen. WW1 and WW2 were partially caused because of the militaristic nature of the Prussia aristocracy, however now that the unification of Germany happened under Austrian hands, we might have a pacifistic Germany.



*Europe, 1765*

it would probably be Austria unifying all of Germany. This would mean a completely different Germany. While Prussia was militaristic, masculine and authoritative, Austria was a pacifist country more inclined towards trade and commerce. The ideals of nationalism and how each ethnic group should have their own country led to the downfall of big empires and the rise of homogenous countries. Perhaps, in this alternate timeline,

the Ottoman and Russian empires might not have fallen. WW1 and WW2 were partially caused because of the militaristic nature of the Prussia aristocracy, however now that the unification of Germany happened under Austrian hands, we might have a pacifistic Germany.

French culture would similarly be heavily influenced by Indian culture, creating a fusion of culture, food and language. Just like how England adopted Indian words such as “thug”, “loot”, “pyjama”, the French would similarly adopt words. They would probably bring Indian food and spices to France and set up a craze for “oriental” cuisine, just like how we see with England and curry.

Overall, we can't say whether French colonization would have been better or worse, but one thing is for sure, India, France and the whole world would be completely different.



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*Chinmay Shankar documented the school trip  
to Germany & Poland in 3 parts.*



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# PART I: THE ANARCHIST WHO OPENED MY EYES

## *BERLIN*

It was the year 1936. Hitler was the democratically elected leader of Germany, mobilising resources to ‘make Germany great again’. As the Nazi party went about acting on its agenda of creating ‘lebensraum’ and strengthening its military power, in an obscure part of Berlin an anarchist was starting a small revolution of his own.

Otto Weidt, a working-class German, had just lost his job as an upholsterer due to his failing eyesight. To earn a living, he set up a workshop to make brushes and brooms in which he employed deaf and blind Jews to protect them. If caught, he would almost certainly be killed. My history group visited the Otto Weidt Museum – Museum Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt - in Berlin to broaden our perspective of the Nazi period.

As I walked into the workshop-turned-museum, the first thing I noticed was how completely ordinary the place looked. The walls were white, the staircases were not too run-down. The rooms inside were of average size. I realized later that was probably intentional. Weidt had wanted the place to be normal-looking so that he could mask the fact that there were Jews hidden inside. But who were these Jews?

My question was answered in the next room.

It was a long room lined with working tables on one side, and a pastel green wall at the farthest end, on which hung a picture capturing all the workers. I noticed how most of the workers were looking away from the camera, in another direction. This is because they were blind, and could not tell where the camera was. However, a few people looked straight at the camera. One of them was Otto Weidt. The others were Jews, who were neither blind nor deaf, but were simply seeking protection. Whenever inspections took place, these people had to either hide or act as if they were blind too.



In the next room, we got detailed information on every person who worked at the museum. I skimmed through these notes. Our guide told us that many of Otto Weidt’s workers were killed, but many survived thanks to him. One of the survivors is Inge Deutschkron, who recently died at age 99. She talks about her time in the workshop in her memoir.

Weidt's brushes were used by the German soldiers to clean their boots, and therefore his Werkstatt was officially classified as 'important for the war effort.' He used this to shield his Jewish workers on several occasions.

Otto Weidt fought fearlessly to save the lives of the Jews in his workshop when the executions began in 1941. Aiding him in this, was a circle of helpers including the likes of Inge and Gustav Held, a German-Jew couple. Inge worked as a secretary in his workshop and used her German identity to skilfully exploit the Gestapo, saving many Jews from deportation. Her Jewish husband Gustav was a doctor and was known for healing the ailing worker Georg Licht.

The museum has separate rooms to catalogue the life stories of the Jews who didn't make it and the ones who survived. Rosa Katz was one of the survivors. Blind since childhood, Rosa lost her brother Siegbert at Auschwitz. Her problems did not stop there. When her parents decided to immigrate to Palestine, Rosa was denied entry due to her blindness. She lived out her last days at a Jewish community hospital, very close to Weidt's workshop.

Towards the end of our tour, we saw a tiny, empty room made of stone. It seemed to radiate coldness. In this cramped room lived full families, when hiding from the Nazis. Human beings had to spend months, almost rotting in a space that was not nearly enough for even one person. However, for a Jew at that time, even being allowed to live was a

boon, and Weidt provided it to them.

As I exit, I realized I have been seeing the Nazi period up close. Many courageous Germans had done their best to stand up to Hitler's tyranny.



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## PART II: INTO THE DEATH VILLAGE

### KRAKOW

Krakow, Poland, is the site of the death village. A camp from which only 15% of the people who were taken in emerged alive. My history group of teenagers visited this place, now a tourist site - a museum to honour the 1.1 million who died there. A way of remembering the wrong-doings of the past in order to prevent the same from occurring again.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp in the world, lay peacefully in front of me. As I entered the camp, I noticed how the neatly cut, richly green grass as well as the almost identical buildings arranged in precise rows conveyed a strong sense of order and authority. Our guide took us into one of these numerous buildings, which were barracks during WWII.



*Entrance to Auschwitz*

Inside, lay mounds upon mounds of hair, shades of black, brown, and blonde clumped together. The thick piles of hair, although 80 years apart from me, were only a panel of glass away. Other than the hair, the room was quite plain. It had white walls and is empty. In another part of the same building, the belongings of the brutally murdered lay. I walk into another similar, empty room, but this time, it had briefcases that were piled up. Differently sized, differently coloured, and differently shaped, the briefcases had only one thing in common. All of them have the name of the owner written in the front. As I exited the room, I noticed the name Hana Reiner written on one of the briefcases. Was she a mother? Was she even old enough to be married? Was she a grandmother? I cannot begin to imagine the difficulties she must have faced in her life.



In other parts of the building, we saw combs, shoes, clothes, and pots belonging to the dead. As we viewed these, our usually chatty, young group stayed silent.

As we passed through the building, the silence seemed to get more entrenched in the surroundings. We walked down a long corridor, and on the walls were photographs, each with a name, a date of birth, a date of deportation and a date of death. We saw the people whose belongings had been piled up in the rooms we just visited. Rows and rows of faces, humans, mothers, brothers, fathers, sisters, husbands, wives, in the corridor, who were treated in their lifetimes like a lower life form.



We moved on to the last place that the people in these photographs saw before they died – the gas chambers. Our guide’s countenance becomes even grimmer. Where I stood, decades ago there had been unsuspecting men, women, and children, all of whom had been killed by the toxic gases settling in their lungs. The dark underground engulfed me as I descended into the chamber. Around me, the walls were rough and coarse. They were

discoloured and had blue and black marks all over. The chamber was a long room with no lighting. In the middle of it, there was a brick structure, in the shape of a cuboid. The fumigant responsible for the walls’ discolouration, Zyklon B, was contained there. I stood there picturing groups of people falling dead onto the floor one by one as the deadly gas suffocated them. The whole room seemed as if it was in anguish. The lack of lighting along with the eerie silence, a requirement at the camp, recreated the atmosphere of intense fear that the victims felt before their death.

On the way to the nearby extermination camp, Birkenau, on the bus, I observed the lives of the Poles today. The vibrant green of the hedges on the pavement covered with bright red, pink and white flowers. On the pavement, two girls laughed, strawberry and vanilla ice cream in their hands. Eighty years ago, this same area was an extermination zone. The Jews at Birkenau were dehumanized to such a level that they were treated like numbers rather than people. My group and I began to really understand the horrors our textbooks describe.

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## PART III: HISTORY DEEP UNDERGROUND

### WIELICZKA

On the surface, Wieliczka, a town near Krakow in southern Poland, seems like a regular town. But dig a little deeper and her history unravels.

Our school tour around Europe brought us to the salt mines of Wieliczka. On our trip, we visited some landmarks of the Nazi empire trying to understand why and how Jews were massacred en masse during this period. The history of the Jews in Wieliczka, dates back to the late medieval period, to around the 14th century and they lived peacefully in this town. In fact, in the inter-war period, between 1919 and 1938, they prospered. There were over 170 Jewish towns and villages, numerous synagogues, and many Jews-owned pubs, inns, shops and factories. Just before the outbreak of World War 2, there were 4000 Jews, making up half of Wieliczka. However, deep into the Second World War, the salt mines of Wieliczka were used as a forced labour camp. Around 80 years after the annihilation of the Wieliczka Jews, my group and I travelled to the same salt mines.

We descended many flights of stairs to get into the mines. It got progressively colder, and I put on my jacket to shield myself from the chill. We reached the first level in the mines, around 64 meters underground, and I looked around. I marvelled at the glimmering

crystals of salt surrounding me. The mines were divided into sections by large wooden doors. To pass onto the next section, the previous section's doors must be closed, due to the mines' ventilation system. The walls of each section are lined by ethereal crystals, glimmer in the light. The crystals are rough and hard to touch. As we descended further into the mines going down to 135 meters below ground (the mine itself is 327 meters below ground), the salt structures around me became more and more elaborate, with crystals in the shape of people, and even chandeliers made out of salt. Grand, gleaming, underground lakes were plentiful in the mines.

The mines have an enchanting cathedral dedicated to its patron St. Kinga a café and humongous ballrooms, where weddings and other functions were held. The intricate and iridescent chandeliers made from salt crystals are a huge attraction.





The Wieliczka mines had a happy history for most of the 7 centuries of its existence. But World War 2 was a brief dark period. The legend of the origin of the salt mines has been passed down from generation to generation. It talks of a now Saint, then Princess Kinga, the daughter of a Hungarian King married to a Polish Duke. As a dowry, she used her engagement ring to bring the salt mines to Poland. Soon the salt mines were one of Wieliczka's main sources of income. The salt was used for storage, a method of payment and had numerous other uses. The prosperity the mines brought helped Poland sustain its economy for centuries. In 1941, this prosperity was shattered.



Being a Jew in Europe, in 1941, was difficult. Hitler and the Nazis wished to exterminate all the Jews of Europe, and Wieliczka was not spared. In May 1941, a ghetto was established there, and 7000 Jews were gathered. For around a year, Jews were systematically executed at the local Jewish cemetery. In early August 1942, the neighbouring towns' Jews were ordered to arrive at Wieliczka. In total, over 9000 Jews were collected at the ghetto, and later in the same month, the final phase of their extermination began. They were sent to concentration camps, extermination camps, and labour camps all around Poland, and many were shot dead in a nearby forest. However, many Jewish families were saved by the Poles of Wieliczka. Almost two years later, a forced labour camp was formed in the salt mines, for the Jews to produce military aircraft for the Germans. Later, because of the advancing Soviet offensive, the camp was shut down, and the Jews were transferred to Czechoslovakia and Austria.

The Nazis had made them toil for their survival. After such terror, it is not difficult to believe that not a single Holocaust-surviving Jew returned to the town. As we take an elevator to exit the mines, I think about how, although the mines were stunning, the story of the Wieliczka salt mines goes so much deeper than just its looks.

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- Across:
- 2. Dravidian
  - 3. Islamophobic
  - 7. Nirmal Sen
  - 11. Uda Devi
  - 14. Hazra
  - 16. Krakow
  - 17. Indian National Congress
  - 18. Otto Weidt
  - 19. Dhaka
- Down:
- 1. Hitler
  - 4. Pakistan Revolution
  - 5. Bhagur
  - 6. Hindu Mahasabha
  - 8. Auschwitz-Birkenau
  - 9. Chola
  - 10. Indian Tricolor
  - 12. Indigo
  - 13. Gandhi
  - 15. Marathi



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