



The Khongjom Anglo-Manipur War and the Keonjhar Rebellion

WHEN HUNDREDS OF HEROES GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR INDIA'S FREEDOM

India's independence was not achieved in a single day or through the efforts of a single person. Rather, it was the culmination of many days and many people's efforts. Throughout the nearly 200-year history of slavery, there were numerous instances when rebellion against British rule erupted. The British did everything they could to suppress them, and they had no idea how many heroes had to die as a result. Khongjom in Manipur and Keonjhar in Odisha are witnesses to such a struggle in India's history.

Those who make sacrifices for the sake of the country are immortalised. By becoming a flower of inspiration, they continue to spread their fragrance generation after generation. India was liberated from hundreds of years of slavery thanks to the combined efforts of three streams. The first stream was revolution, the second Satyagraha, and the third was public awareness. All three of these streams have emerged in the tricolor's three colours. On the occasion of Martyrs' Day on March 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

said at the opening of the Biplobi Bharat Gallery at Victoria Memorial Hall, "The saffron colour of our tricolour symbolises the stream of revolution. The colour white represents the flow of Satyagraha and nonviolence. The colour green, the flow of creative instincts, and the blue circle inside the tricolour are all symbols of India's cultural consciousness, in my opinion. Today, I see New India's future in the three colours of the tricolour."

The saffron colour now inspires us to do our duty and protect our country. The colour white is



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MATHRUBHUMI WAS FOUNDED ON MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEALS

Mathrubhumi was founded to support India's freedom struggle, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. It began on March 18, 1923. When we look back at our history, we see that many great people have been associated with one or more newspapers. Lokmanya Tilak promoted Kesari and Mahratta, while Gopal Krishna Gokhale supported Hitavad. Swami Vivekananda was associated with Prabuddha Bharat, while Mahatma Gandhi was associated with Young India, Navajivan, and Harijan. Shyamji Krishna Varma edited The Indian Sociologist.

VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL NOW HOUSES THE BIPLOBI BHARAT GALLERY

The Biplobi Bharat Gallery, which showcases the contributions of revolutionaries to the freedom struggle and their armed resistance to British colonial rule, exemplifies the government's commitment to preserving and nurturing West Bengal's rich cultural and historical heritage. The gallery's depiction of armed resistance has yet to find its rightful place in the larger story of the freedom movement. The goal of this new gallery is to provide a comprehensive view of the events leading up to 1947, emphasising the importance of the revolutionaries.

now associated with "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas." Today, the green colour represents India's major goals for renewable energy and environmental protection, and the blue circle in the tricolour is synonymous with the blue economy. On March 18, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the centenary celebrations of the Malayalam daily Mathrubhumi, saying, "We did not get the opportunity to sacrifice our lives during the freedom struggle for Swarajya." However, Amrit Kaal provides us with an opportunity to contribute to the development of a strong, developed, and inclusive India. Making good policies is one aspect of any country's development." This demonstrates that, with the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in mind,

there is much more that can be done to build a better nation in the years ahead. The media can be an excellent medium for bringing to light lesser-known incidents of freedom struggle and anonymous freedom fighters. Similarly, every town or village has locations associated with the freedom movement that are little known. We can highlight those locations and encourage people to visit them.

Read the stories of two such struggles in this issue of the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, which may not have received the recognition they deserved in the annals of history. But that worked to shake the British Empire's foundations. The story of the freedom struggle in Khongjom, Manipur, and Keonjhar, Odisha, captivates...

MANIPURI WARRIORS FOUGHT VALIANTLY AGAINST THE BRITISH IN KHONGJOM

Khongjom, in the north-eastern state of Manipur, is one such place where an armed rebellion has put British rule on the defensive. The Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 was one of the most significant events in the country's history. Many people from the small state of Manipur fought against the mighty British Empire and gave their lives to protect their motherland's dignity, honour, and sovereignty during the war against British colonial expansion. The British Empire's "sun never sets" was more than a catch phrase; it was a fact. Fighting a small state like Manipur against the British meant only one thing: Manipur's defeat. Regardless, the valiant Manipuri warriors did not give up.

In fact, the British government had hoped to keep Manipur under its control from the start, but this proved impossible. In such a situation, the British sent 400 Gorkha soldiers to Manipur on March 22, 1890, and on March 24, 1891, they attacked the palace of Kangla in Manipur. Many people died as a result of the British's unjust attitude, and an armed conflict erupted between Manipuri and British forces. The English army had modern weapons, such as bomb shells, whereas the Manipuri army only had traditional spears and swords. Despite this, the Manipuri army fought valiantly against the British. The British surrendered and were defeated in the first phase of the war, but in the second phase, the British were victorious.

The Manipuri army fought valiantly but was defeated at Khongjom on April 23, 1891, and many brave warriors were killed. This battle is regarded as one of the fiercest in the history of India's freedom struggle. This day is known as Khongjom Day because the battle took place at Kheba Hills in Khongjom, Manipur. The British had direct control over Manipur after the war ended on April 27, 1891.

Following the war, the British government prosecuted and sentenced many people to death. Crown Prince Tikendrajit, Thangal General, were hanged on August 13, 1891. Not only this, four others, including Prince Tikendrajit, was hanged by the British, while Kulchandra was deported



KHONGJOM WAR MEMORIAL COMPLEX

The Khongjom War Memorial Complex is located at Khongjom in the Thoubal district of Manipur. The memorial complex was constructed as a tribute to the brave Manipuri soldiers who fought against the British in the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891. Khongjom Day is celebrated every year on April 23, and this year marks its 131st anniversary.

to the Andaman Islands with 22 others. The British are said to have been dismayed by the valour and bravery of the Manipuri army and people. In Khongjom, Manipur, brave soldiers have sacrificed their lives so that the coming generations can breathe the air of freedom. The process of annexing Indian states to the British Empire began with the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and ended with the Battle of Khongjom. Following this battle, Manipur became the last state in the Indian subcontinent to fall under the control of the British Empire.

This war is known as the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891. A war memorial was inaugurated in Khongjom, Manipur, on April 23, 2016 by then-President Pranab Mukherjee.

BHUYAN AND JUANG TRIBALS' REBELLION IN KEONJHAR HAD CHALLENGED THE BRITISH

The revolt of the Bhuyan and Juang tribals in Keonjhar, Odisha, not only challenged but also ended British rule. In fact, the British government installed a new king on the throne against the wishes and customs of Keonjhar's Bhuyan and Juang people. The British desired to rule through a king whom the locals despised. The new king was acting in the best interests of the British, not the people. In such a case, as soon as he ascended to the throne, he began collecting arbitrary taxes. On April 21, 1868, the Juang and Bhuyan people, led by Ratna and Nanda Naik, took up arms and revolted against the British and the new king's exploitation.

Ratna Nayak, who was born in Tarpur village of Keonjhar district in 1820, led the anti-British movement in Keonjhar. Ratna Nayak Bhuyan came from a tribal family, and people like Nand Nayak, Nand Pradhan, Babu Nayak, Dasarathi Kunwar, and Padu Nayak supported him in this cause. This uprising was in response to the tyranny and injustice of British rule and the local king. In such circumstances, the rebels looted the Keonjhar market and stormed the palace on April 28, 1868, kidnapping the king's Diwan and 100 of his soldiers and supporters.

Following this, the British government decided to crush the movement, and on May 7, 1868, an army detachment led by Singhbhum Deputy Governor Dr. W. Hyes arrived in Keonjhar. When the army arrived, it attacked the tribals, infuriating the movement. Following this, agitators led by Ratna Nayak assassinated the Diwan. Hyes couldn't take the defeat and turned it into a prestige issue. In such a case, the British gave the order to set fire to the tribals' homes and began action.

Simultaneously, Hyes issued a decree stating, "You people surrender or all will be killed." The agitators, however, did not listen and cut off the road link between Chaibasa and Keonjhar. In such a situation, the British dispatched Commissioner Colonel ET Dalton from Chota Nagpur to Keonjhar, but he was unable to reach the site of the movement due to the heat and hilly terrain. In such a situation, the British began



Sign of Keonjhar's Battle

The royal palace of the then Keonjhar State in Odisha, from where this rebellion started and the people of Bhuyan tribal society took up arms under the leadership of Ratna Nayak. The result of the rebellion may have gone in favor of the British, but the impact of this movement was not only on Odisha but on the whole country.

attempting to suppress the rebellion with the help of the kings of neighbouring kingdoms and a large army. As part of this effort, armies from neighbouring states Banai, Mayurbhanj, Pallhara, and Dhenkanal were dispatched. Simultaneously, Cuttack commissioner T E Rabhensa was dispatched to Keonjhar, where he asked the agitators to surrender, but Ratna Nayak refused and vowed to fight until the end.

Later, both Ratna Nayak and Nand Nayak surrendered to save the Bhuyan community. They were hanged by the British. The British also imprisoned Queen Vishnupriya Devi, who supported the agitators. Later, Dharnidhar Nayak gave this movement a new impetus. This movement had such a large impact that it was felt all over the country. ■