

# THE UNSUNG HEROES OF UNDIVIDED SAMBALPUR DISTRICT

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## **Abstract:**

*Sambalpur, the hub of western Orissa has permanently registered her name in the glorious chapter of Indian history especially freedom movement of India. During the freedom struggle of Orissa as a whole and undivided Sambalpur district in particular many freedom fighters had participated in the national movements and played a vital role but remained unrecognized and unknown. The freedom movement in Sambalpur passed through three well marked phases. The first phase (1803 -1885) witnessed the foundation of British rule in Orissa and armed resistance of the people against the imposition of new system of Government highly prejudicial to their interest. The second phase (1885-1920) saw the birth of political institutions in the wake of the formation of the Indian National Congress and the radical growth of political awareness among the people. The third phase (1920-1947) is related predominantly to the congress. However, in spite of their dedication and sacrifice in these above movements, they could not occupy a permanent place in the Pages of Sambalpur history and remained unsung and neglected. They should be highlighted and brought to lime light. So, humble attempts have been made to enlighten some of the obscure freedom fighters of Sambalpur in this article.*

**Keywords:** Undivided Sambalpur, British, Freedom movement, unsung heroes, neglected.

## **1. Introduction:**

The Undivided Sambalpur District, a hub of British imperialism in Orissa had been named after the headquarters town, Sambalpur. The town has derived its name from the presiding goddess Samalai. It is an ancient town mentioned in the book of Ptolemy (2nd Century A.D.) as 'Sambalaka' situated on the left of the river "Manada," now known as Mahanadi<sup>1</sup> (Supkar: 2008). During the middle of the 14th century, Ramai Deva (1355-1380) laid the foundation of the Chauhan rule in Western Odisha<sup>2</sup> (Sahu&Mishra : 1979) However, the Chauhan rule came to a close and finally it passed on to the British in 1817. There had been political turmoil in Sambalpur from 1817 to 1827 during the reign of Maharaja Sai's widow Rani Mohan Kumari<sup>3</sup> (Ibid). After the death of Narayan Singh in 1849, Sambalpur was annexed with British Empire as per Doctrine of Lapse. As a consequence Surendra Sai and his associates launched resistance movement against the British over the throne of Sambalpur from 1849 to 1864<sup>4</sup>(Orissa: 2012).

This struggle is replete with acts of courage, sacrifice and dedication to the cause of freedom. The heroes of freedom struggle came from the nook and corner of the district. They spoke heterogeneous languages followed heterogeneous and religions and belonged to heterogeneous castes but an intense love for their country and a keen desire to see it free permeated all their existence. Some of them laid down their lives and immortalized themselves in the annals of freedom struggle. Some among them remain anonymous and their names do not finding mention in the page of history.

The chivalrous history of Sambalpur is virtually replete with valour to safeguard the swaraj. The people of Sambalpur actively participated in the freedom struggle of Orissa and dedicated their time and

life for the sake of motherland. Not only men but also the women of Sambalpur jumped into the frying pan of freedom struggle and showed their vigour and bravery despite of their domestic grim and social debar. Prominent among them were Prabhavati Devi, Jambuvati Devi and Krishna Devi etc.

It is said that great men are public misfortune. The subjects and the soldiers showed their indomitable valour, valiance and courage for the cause of nation but the credit went to the Kings only. They remained unknown. This is exactly what happened during the freedom movements of the land. Many freedom fighters were real organizers, active workers, motivators and inspirers behind the movements but they are vanishing from the memory of people day by day. They could not come to the lime light. The people are oblivious of their sacrifice, dedication and duty towards the motherland. By virtue of initiation either of their relatives or well - wishers some of the front leaders like veer Surendra Sai, Hathi Singh etc could accumulate public recognition but those concealed that were behind these stars are still unknown.

Myriad of sons and daughters of India who had laid down their valuable lives at the altar of India's freedom movement, a handful names have been brought to light and the rest who might have found magnificent places, in the annals of our freedom struggle have been gradually but indubitably disappearing into oblivion.

The following names are some of the obscured freedom fighters of undivided Samabalpur district worthy to be enlightened in this article. They are Hate Singh, Prabhavati Devi, Jambuvati Devi, Krishna Devi, Gurubair Meher, Prabhavati Devi, Kunjal Singh, Dayal Sardar, Karunakar Gartia, Hathi Singh, Madho Singh, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Chhabila Sai, Druva Sai, Dharanidhar Mishra, etc<sup>5</sup>(Hasan :2001).

## 2. Madho Singh - A Martyr Zamindar of Ghens:

Martyr Madho Singh was the erstwhile Zamindar of Ghens in the district of Sambalpur. He and his three illustrious sons Hathe Singh, Kunjal Singh and Bairee Singh had made great sacrifices in the cause of freedom during the Great Revolt of 1857 Shri Madho Singh created a lot of troubles to the British forces under the valiant leadership of Veer Surendra Sai. The Singhora hill pass which was the only passage to the east was well fortified by the armed men of where a large number of British soldiers lost their lives in the encounter. The British attacked time and again but could not defeat Madho Singh. On the other hand, each occasion they were defeated. One of such battles British captain Mr Wood Bridge was slain by the guerilla band of Madho Singh. After that, the British gave up their attempt to subdue him and his men. However, Madho Singh was captured and executed.

Madho Singh's astute leadership, skillful swordmanship, his proficiency in guerilla warfare, exemplary courage, indomitable valour and undaunting love for country's freedom had struck awe in the hearts of the enemies. After martyrdom of Madho Singh the mantle of freedom struggle fell on the shoulders of his three valiant sons.

## 3. Ghanashyam Panigrahi: - A Veteran Congress Worker at Sambalpur.

Ghanashyam Panigrahi gets prominence as being a true patriot of Orissa who dedicated a larger part of his life towards the freedom movement of Orissa especially Sambalpur district. He was born at Manpur village (Now Bargarh district) on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1881. He was the son of Uddhaba Panigrahi and Rahi Devi. He began his career as a school teacher at the age of 12 with a monthly salary of Rs.10/-. He was the first teacher of Manpur U.P.School in 1901<sup>6</sup> (Panda: 2007). He was a sincere teacher and made a whirlwind tour from village to village to contact the people. He worked sometimes in the village of Ganiapali around 1910 A.D. He came close to local kaviraj and became of a practioner of Ayurvedic medicine for a long period of time.

It is surprising to note that when Gandhiji's clarion call reached to the people to join in Non Co - operation Movement, Ghanshyam Panigrahi was the first man to respond to that call enthusiastically.

### India National Congress and Ghanashyam Panigrahi :

He was the active member of Indian National Congress till India got her Independence. In 1921, he attended the All India Congress Committee Meeting at Ahmedabad as a representative of the Sambalpur District Congress Committee<sup>7</sup> (Ibid). After returning from Ahmadabad, he devoted his all time and energy to enrolling people as primary membership. He made a whirlwind tour from village to village and tried to

disseminate message of Gandhiji and the Congress. In the year 1922, he attended The Congress Annual Session at Gaya. The non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhi took a violent turn in 1922 due to Chauri Chaura incident.

Gandhiji urged the congress workers to devote themselves to the 18 point programmes and Ghanashyam Panigrahi strictly followed the Gandhiji's mantra and inspired the people boycott the foreign goods and to prepare own clothes. He worked assiduously for popularization of Khadi in Sambalpur district. He was the first individual to take the lead in organizing the movements in the rural areas of Sambalpur with the help of other volunteers. He formed a Congress Committee at Remunda and Garturun in 1936. In the same year, he formed another Congress Committee with sixty members at Bargaon with the help of Upendra Panigrahi.

He attended the Congress Session at Gaya and Kolkata in 1925, 1928 respectively. In the Calcutta session of 1928, it was decided that the congress should demand complete and dominion status for India from the British government. So, date was fixed on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1930 to observe Purna Swaraj all over India. Accordingly a large meeting was organized at Sambalpur near Balibandha Shiva Temple at mid night on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1930. Ghanashyam Panigrahi presided over this meeting.

In course of time, Ghanashyam Panigrahi developed a close connection with the congress members and the satyagraha centres at Bheuria, Panimora and Samalipadar of the Zamindari of Raj Borasambar. He performed suta or sutra yajna at many places and organized such yajna at Bargaon in 1938 where District Congress President Prahalad Rai Lath and Secretary Dayanand Sathpathy were present.<sup>8</sup> (Loc.cit)

In 1939, he established a Charkha Sangha with the members many villa "Samagra Grama Seva Mandal" was set up at sambalpur to popularize Khadi and village industries in the rural areas. He himself was the president and Shiva Narayan Padhi worked as the secretary of this mandal. Ghanashyam Panigrahi attended the Congress Session at Ramgarh in 1940.

Besides that, Ghanshyam Panigrahi attended the meeting of Prajamandal movement at different places like Sonepur, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur. He presided over a Gadjat Karmee Sammelan of about six thousand people at Kalapathar in Sonepur.

#### 4. Kunjal Singh: a gallantry freedom fighter of Sambalpur:

Among the freedom struggle of Sambalpur, the most formidable and gallantry was Kunjal Singh, the second son of Madho Singh, the Zamindar of Ghens. He married to Bisnupriya and had a daughter name Purnima. He associates were Kamal Singh, Selegam Bariha and his son - in - law Govind Singh who were fearless warriors and living with dream to free their motherland from the clutches of the British. In November, 1857 during the sepoy mutiny, Maharaja Sai, the Binjhal Zamindar of Deoree helped Lt Smith to capture Kunjal Singh's father Narayan Singh who was anti British. So, Narayan Singh was arrested and sent Raipur jail where he was later on executed on the charge of rebellion (The family member of Narayan Singh also detained at Raipur. Subsequently they were released from the jail and kept under the strict surveillance of Maharaja Sai, who obtained the Zamindari of Sonakhan on a limited lease.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1858, around 500 rebels under the command of Kunjal Singh marched towards Deoree and house of Maharaja Sai was seized. Govind Singh pulled Maharaja Sai out of his house and Kunjal Singh chopped his head off. His house was ransacked and valuables looted. So, Capt. Forster, the officiating Commissioner of Sambalpur issued letters to different Zamindars not to help the rebels and pull them down. Lt. Taylor mobilized troops from Sambalpur to capture Kunjal Singh and announced of Rs.250/- to capture him.

On 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1860, Kunjal Singh along with Surendra Sai raided Timroda and Brindaban and killed 12 British soldiers. Therefore, with instruction of Capt. C.Elliot, the deputy commissioner of Raipur, Lt. Cookburn took a large cavalry and infantry to Khullaree Pargana but failed to achieve any success. Afterward Major Forster directed Lt. Taylor to march Manikgarh where Kunjal Singh along with Surendra Sai was taking shelter. This mission also fruitless. To putdown the rebels, the Commissioner of Sambalpur called for the 40 Madras Infantry. Kunjal Singh got the information from one of his spy Pitkabri that Capt. Elliot with the Madras infantry would come to Sambalpur through Khariar. Kunjal and Kamal Singh made a fierce attack on them so they retreated.

When Major Impey wanted a peaceful compromise between the British and the rebels, Kunjal Singh expressed his willingness to surrender but unfortunately he was seriously fell ill. However, objections were raised by the Deputy Commissioner of Raipur regarding grant of pardon to Kunjal for his

murder of Deoree Zamindar and abduction of his two daughters. Kunjal Singh became a headache for the British and the British could not capture to him for a long days. In early 1865 in the village Sidhira after getting a tip from the British spy Srimat, Kunjal and Salik Ram Bariha were captured and kept in Sambalpur jail. Charges of murder and arson were framed against them and in a murk trail Kunjal and Salik Ram Bariha were executed.

### **5. Hathi Singh: first Odia to send Kalapani Jail:**

Hathi Singh was the eldest grandson of Madho Singh, the Zamindar of Ghens. He played a vital role in strengthening the defence of Ghens and participated with his grandfather in controlling communication through the Singhora pass. He bravely faced the attack of Captain Shakespear at Singhora pass. Hathi Singh became unconscious by blasting of cannon balls and Surendra Sai took him to a cave and treated him. Hathi Singh was a source of information and strength of Surendra. After surrendered of Druva Sai and his brother Udanta Sai, Hathi Singh surrendered in 1862. So he was given the Zamindary of Ghens. But he was rearrested by Cumberlege, the Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur by in 1864 on the charge of harbouring his brother Kunjal Singh in his estate. He was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment and was later on transported to Andamans where he died with a painful heart.

### **6. Karunakar Gartia – A Martyr Zamindar of Kolabira:**

He was the Zamindar of Kolabira and one the trusted associated of Surendra Sai. Karunakar used to supply food stuff for guiding the Jharghaty pass. Captain J.B.Knocker on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1857 and to his surprise he found the place completely deserted. The house of Zamindar Karunakar was heavily fired by Lt Hadow of the Madras Artillery and completely rooted out. Major Bates with a vast troops besieged Kolabira in January 1858 and the burnt the entire village to ashes. Gartia along with other 13 rebel chiefs surrendered before the Bates and Karunakar Gartia was hanged at Sambalpur on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1858 and Zamindary was confiscated.

### **7. Chhabila Sai:**

He was the fourth brother of Surendra Sai whole heartedly participated his brother's struggle for the gudee of Sambalpur against the British. At last Chhabila Sai was killed in an ambush at middle place of Kudopali village by Captain Wood on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1857.

### **8. Dayal Sardar – A Martyr of Kharsal Zamindar:**

He was the Zamindar of Kharsal. He devoted his whole life by supporting and worked with Surendra Sai in the resistance movement of Sambalpur. By the order of G.F. Cockburn, the Commissioner of Cuttack, Dayal Sardar was arrested and hanged on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1858.

### **9. Dharanidhar Mishra – A Faithful advisor of Surendra Sai:**

He was the prominent Advisor of Surendra Sai in the political movement of Sambalpur. At last he was arrested at the Bargaon house of Surendra Sai in 1864 and his trial began at the Session Court of Raipur where he was sentenced to 7 years rigorous imprisonment.

### **10. Druva Sai – A Devotee Brother of Surendra Sai:**

Druva Sai was the 2<sup>nd</sup> brother of Surendra Sai. He actively participated in the sepoy mutiny of 1857 and surrendered to the British on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1862. After released, he was again arrested in his house at Tabala village and his trial began at Session Court in 1864. He was sentenced to transportation for life with forfeiture of his properties. However, judicial Commissioner accused him and detained him in the Asirgarh hill fort under regulation III of 1888. Notwithstanding he was released on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1877 on the eve of Queen Victoria's assuming the title of Empress of India.

### **11. Bhagirathi Patnaik: An Outstanding Congress Worker:**

The soil of Sambalpur has produced so many heroes who sacrificed and dedicated themselves in the service of the motherland against the tyrannical foreign rule during the freedom movement in Sambalpur. Sambalpur formed the streams of militant nationalism in the war of independence where the name of Bhagirathi Patnaik has been written in golden letters.

Bhagirathi Patnaik was born on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1884 at Barpali. His parents were Jadunath Patnaik and Kumari Bani. He left school when he was in 9<sup>th</sup> class due to accidental death of father in 1903 at Attabira. He sometimes worked as a teacher of Oriya at Simagaon Dhanwantri, Madhya Pradesh and later joined as a Nazir in the court of the Patna King Prithviraj Singh Deo. He was promoted to the position of Munshi and lastly to the personal secretary of the king.

He spent long 9 years like a deaf, dumb and blind man in the empire of tyranny and suppression. When he started raising voice against the oppressive king, he was arrested and sent to jail at Bolangir on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1920<sup>10</sup> (Das: 2010). After released from Bolangir jail on 07.12.1920, he brought a Charkha and started spinning Khaddar. He trained his son Prafulla Patnaik and wife Jambubati in this regard. Gandhiji launched Non Co operation Movement in August 1920 and this movement was spread out in Sambalpur under the leadership of Chandra Sekhar Behera.

It was on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1921, a grand meeting was held at Sunaripada of Barpali where Bhagirathi played a prominent role in enrolling the people in the movement. Bhagirathi Patnaik moved from village to village for preparing people for Gaya Congress session and a meeting was organized at Balibandha, Sambalpur from 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1922 to 25<sup>th</sup> October 1922. He was selected to the Orissa Provincial Congress from Sambalpur. The congress session was held from 26<sup>th</sup> December 1922 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1922. When Gandhiji arrested on 11.01.1923 after Gaya Congress, Bhagirathi Patnaik along with his friends observed 'Hartal' in Sambalpur town on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1923. He joined Kakinada Congress held on 28.12.1923 by the congress representative ticket No.2447. Bhagirathi met Muhammad Ali, the president of the Kakinada Congress and Motilal Nehru.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian National Congress was held at Belgaon in 1924, Jawaharlal Nehru issued special delegates card for Bhagirathi Patnaik. Bhagirathi distributed the cyclostyled copies regarding the negligence of the Pradesh Congress Committee.

Sambalpur played an important role during the Salt Satyagraha Movement of 1930. Bhagirathi organized a public meeting at Bargarh with Chaturbhuj and Premshankar to discuss the matter. During 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Satyagraha Bhagirathi along with his revolutionary workers was arrested on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1932. Bhagirathi along with his wife Jambubati and son Prafulla started individual civil disobedience movement and they were arrested on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1933 while picketing at Bargarh<sup>11</sup> (Tendulkar: 1969).

Bhagirathi played active part in the Quit India Movement in 1942. He organized a meeting at Sambalpur where his wife and son wholeheartedly co-operated him by collecting funds for the August Revolution. His wife died on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1943 when he and his son were in jail.

The contributions of Bhagirathi and his family in the freedom struggle are priceless and immeasurable. It is a rarest to rare example that whole family jumped over the frying pan of freedom movement and sacrificed their lives for the sake of motherland. Bhagirathi Patnaik was an ardent follower of Gandhiji. He entered into the Jagannath temple at Barpali with the untouchables. He took active part in the Bhoodan movement in 1957. In this movement; they got a village "Panimora" as Gramdan. The great soul vanished with the Supreme Soul leaving his unforgettable deeds.

## 12. Krishna Devi - A Devoted Congress Worker:

Prior to the visit of Gandhiji and his wife to Sambalpur, Krishna Devi, a Punjabi woman came to settle at Sambalpur. The wife of a Biri businessman, she had already been in the Congress movement and showed her courage and patriotism for the cause of motherland. She spent three years in Sambalpur region and took leadership of various programmes of Congress. Under her leadership, the women of Sambalpur assembled at a special meeting in the honour of Gandhiji and Kasturba. This was the first ever women gathering in the history of freedom movement of Sambalpur. When she was addressing to a mammoth Peasant Conference at Budharaja in March 1931, she was arrested and sent to jail.

After releasing from jail, she visited Bargarh. The women of Bargarh organized a grand meeting in honour of Krishna Devi. She stayed there some times and created political consciousness among the Congress workers. At that time, Fakir Behera donated his Bargarh residence for Congress Office and it was denominated as "Krishna Bhawan". She inaugurated the first Congress Office in Bargarh. By that time, this Bhawan was the only training centre for Congress workers in western Orissa.

Many women were inspired by Krishna Devi to join in the Congress movement. Mention may be made of Jambuvati Patnaik, wife of famous freedom fighter Bhagirathi Patnaik of Barpali, Gandharvi Devi, daughter-in-law of Fakir Behera of Baltikira, Ila Meher, the wife of Kunja Bihari of Tukurla, Shreeyabati Devi, wife of senior freedom fighter Ghanashyam Panigrahi of Manpur (Bheden) and so as many wives of leaders, workers and kith and kins. She even presided over the Dandi Diwas at Gandhi Ghat in Sambalpur on March 1931.

## 13. Jambuvati Devi (1886-1943): First woman Satyagrahi of Western Orissa:

Jambuvati Devi was the first woman satyagrahi of western Orissa. She was born on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1886 at Binka. She got married to Bhagirathi Patnaik of Barpali who was the fore front freedom fighter of western Orissa. Jambuvati Devi was very much interested to make a happy family but man proposes God disposes.

She was very much influenced and inspired by Rama Devi and jumped into the pan of freedom fight India. In 1929, she left home with her husband and son Prafulla for the cause of Congress Movement. She established Ashram at Balitikira, Tukurla (Bargarh), Budharaja (Sambalpur) and also at Jharsuguda<sup>12</sup> (Singh: 52). By taking this step, she strengthened to the Congress Organisation and produced female leaders for the movement. From February 1931, she walked shoulder to shoulder with her husband and son in the freedom struggle of the country.

It was a rare case in India that whole family jumped in to the freedom movement for the service of the motherland. For the first time, she participated in Civil Disobedience Movement and was arrested and sent to Sambalpur jail for 6 months and then shifted to Bhagalpur Central Jail for next 6 months<sup>13</sup> (Supkar:2008). Under her leadership, 10 women joined in Balasore Salt Satyagraha. She was expert to organize women association and collect subscription for salt Satyagraha. She played a unique role in creating patriotic feeling among the women. During Civil Disobedience Movement, she was the front leader to distribute the pamphlets of Congress propaganda. At the time of individual Satyagraha in August, 1933, she picketed before foreign clothes shops at Marwadipara in Sambalpur and before foreign liquor shops in Bargarh and got rigorous imprisonment of four months. She had done social work for the victims of earthquake in Bihar with her husband and son in 1934. She started Satyagraha at Bargarh and was imprisoned for six months.

She also actively participated in Khadi movement, picketing and establishment of Gandhian Society. For this reason she was arrested and sent to jail during Quit India Movement. Many times along with her husband and son, she moved from village to village to spread the message of Congress. She participated in Harijan marching from May 1934 to 1942. During Quit India Movement in 1942, she was arrested at Dumka (Tukni) in Bihar<sup>14</sup> (Hasan: 2001). Her role in freedom year in 1943, she returned to immortal soul on the soil of Bihar.

#### 14. Prabhavati Devi - A Dedicated Congress Worker:

Prabhavati Devi was the daughter of Dhanapati Dash of Bargarh. Though Prabhavati became widow at the age of 10 when she was the student of class 5th yet, her conservative Brahminical tradition could not keep her in four walls of home. She was inspired by Fakir Behera, the then Congress leader and desired to join in freedom movement of Orissa. When popular woman Congress leader Malati Devi visited Bargarh, Prabhavati requested her to keep her as a worker and to take her with her. Malati Devi understood the sorrow of Prabhavati and decided to take her to Bari ashram of Rama Devi. Prabhavati went to Bari with her maternal uncle Raghava Chandra Dash to enroll in Congress against the will of her parents. Prabhavati left home so the villagers boycotted her family from the social customary. From the incident, one can imagine the pathetic and pitiable condition of the widow of that time in Sambalpur. The social boycott was withdrawn when they knew that Prabhavati was in the ashram of Rama Devi<sup>15</sup> (Supkar, Loc.cit).

After taking training at Bari, she took part in police station gherao in Bargarh, distribution of congress propaganda pamphlets etc. For this reason she was arrested and went to jail for one and half year. When Malati Choudhury organized a meeting on the bank of the river Jeera in Bargarh, Prabhavati Devi was the first woman to join there. Through Malati Choudhury, Prabhavati Devi met Parvati Giri at Bari Ashram in 1938 and participated in satyagraha, spinning and weaving, cottage industry, fundamental education, adult education, women development, Khadi, animal husbandry and took training in national linguistic education<sup>16</sup> (Hasan, op.cit). This ashram had been established with the collaboration of Gopabandhu Choudhury, Surendra Patnaik, Rama Devi, Godavari Devi, Sushila Devi, Tulasi Devi, Mangala Sengupt and Annapurna Devi. Due to want of Congress workers, Prabhavati Devi and Parvati Giri were sent to Sambalpur in 1940. She became the dedicated worker of Indian National Congress in 1941 and toured from village to village to make people boycott foreign goods and propagated Swadeshi movement. She also participated in salt Satyagraha. She often took part in the freedom fighters meeting of Panimara. She also worked for 15 days with Gandhiji in Wardha Ashram.

Prabhavati Devi participated in Quit India movement at the age of 26. She was arrested Prabhavati Devi participated in Quit India movement at the age of 26. She was arrested by police on 23rd August, 1943 due to circulation of Congress propaganda and pamphlets and sent to Sambalpur jail. Next year, she was shifted to Cuttack jail where she stayed with Rama Devi, Malati Devi etc and released from jail with them in 1945. Then she resumed the work. So, she was again arrested and sent to Cuttack jail for 6 months. After returning from jail, she opened a Matrumangal centre at Bargaon with the cooperation of Upendra Panigrahi, Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Narasimha Panigrahi and Shiv Narayan Padhi at the instruction of Rama

Devi. This centre was situated only 7 kms from Sambalpur. She joined in Bhoodan Movement and participated in foot marching of Binoba Bhave.

### 15. Gurubari Meher - A Valiant Woman Freedom Fighter of Sambalpur:

She was a valiant woman freedom fighter of Sambalpur. Gurubari Meher played an important role in the freedom struggle as three other famous women fighters of western Orissa - Jambubati Devi, Prabhavati Devi and Parbati Giri. "Gurubari's story of valour should be made popular to inspire modern Indian women. The movement of Gurubari was spearheading and was an offshoot of the Praja Mandal Movement, which was inaugurated at Cuttack in 1938. This branch was launched for the first time at Sonepur under the leadership of Laxman Satpathy. She took the plunge and led a protest against the extra cess charged on various goods. A few months before India became independent the then princely state of Sonepur let loose a reign of terror over Binika area on January 28. The people rose in revolt against the king for his pro-British stance. Nearly 20,000 freedom fighters, led by a brave woman, Gurubari Meher organized a mass movement against the king. Police resorted to baton charge and the woman leader Gurubari Meher was shot dead by the police. She became a martyr in India's freedom struggle. She laid down her life for India's sake but remained unsung.

### 6. Why the above freedom fighters were neglected?

Many freedom fighters of this region have been neglected and the article tends to enlighten their dedication and selfless work for the sake of motherland during British rule. These freedom fighters were treated as rebels and traitors even by the indigenous people of high ranks like Kings, Zamindars etc and were harassed and troubled by them. Even after independence, the same traitors managed to hold the administrative and electoral bodies and behaved them as in pre - independent period. They contested elections because of their abundant money and supporters and debarred the freedom fighters from contesting election lest if the freedom fighters contested election, they should easily win the favour of the people. Therefore, they said that, the works of the freedom fighters had been over and they would work for the constructive work of the country.

Only a few freedom fighters that were elected by people or got higher posts could command some mix respect and feeling but other were derogated and disgusted. Therefore, they remained obscured and unsung. If the freedom fighters hailed to other nations, they would be honoured and rewarded but unfortunately, the high profile people of this nation denied them what they deserved but rather viewed them in derogatory and trifling eyes. Therefore, it is high time we woke to the reality.

### 17. Conclusion:

It will throw new light on the valiance and valour of freedom fighters behind the vanguard that made the movements successful and remained obscured and forgotten. The less known freedom fighters were the bonafide organizers, motivators, initiators and inspirers not only of people but also of various campaigns but credit went to the front leaders. In earlier research work, attempts fell short in highlighting vividly the contributions of these obscure known freedom fighters that had done excellent job for the sake of motherland. Through this article attempts have been made to limelight their dedicated work and sacrifice for the sake of motherland. They neglected their families, sacrificed valuable times, happiness and did yeoman's job for the nation and people but they did not get the honour, respect and reward as they deserved. From Madho Singh to Gurubar Meher scores of such Sambalpur martyrs died unwept, unsung, unhonoured and even unidentified and unclaimed and were consequently completely forgotten even by our post independent historians. So, these unsung heroes will be given their due recognition and honour.

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