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LIFE AND MOVEMENTS  
OF  
BIRSA MUNDA

EDITED BY  
DR. MANOJ SAHARE

ISBN-978-81-928733-3-6

# **LIFE AND MOVEMENTS OF BIRSA MUNDA**

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**Section-I**  
**ENGLISH**

## Impact of Birsa Munda on Indian Tribal Society and Feminist Movements

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### Introduction:

Birsa Munda – a tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and a folk hero belonged to the Munda tribe. Birsa Munda spearheaded an Indian tribal mass movement that arose in the tribal belt of modern Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the late 19th century during the British Raj. Munda is one of the most important faces of Indian tribal movements against the British, who inspired various tribes not only Mundas but also Kharias and Oraons, who accepted him as their leader. Birsa Munda was born at Ulihatu in the Bengal Presidency (presently in Jharkhand) on 15 November 1875 into a Munda family. Munda spent his childhood amidst poverty in a typical tribal setup, where he converted to Christianity and became Birsa David in order to receive an education from a missionary school. During the late 1880s, Munda began to understand the nature of exploitation meted out by the British against the native tribals. The huge disruption caused by British agrarian policies made an impact on the

livelihood of these tribal people, disrupting their usual way of life which was hitherto peaceful and in tune with nature. Not only British economic and political policies but also aggressive religious and cultural policies of the Christian missionaries which belittled the tribal people and their culture acted as fuel for their fight against the British. Birsa was strongly entrenched in the movement against the British oppression of the tribal communities.

### Feminism Viewpoint:

Feminist views and feminism are not same. Although the two terms “feminist” and “feminism” entered the English language in the 1980s (MIA Encyclopedia, 2008), these terms are simply two different phenomena or stages of development of human history and civilization. Traces of the former, i.e., *feminist views* could be found in the respective literatures of ancient civilizations of Greece and China, whereas the latter, i.e., *feminism* is a 20<sup>th</sup> century movement. Feminism as a set of ideas and concepts that stands for a



distinctive and established sociopolitical ideology developed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It challenged the most basic assumptions of conventional political thought which kept the role of women off the political agenda on the basis of their sexual “disability” or “disadvantage.” However, with the flowering of radical feminist thought in the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminism emerged as a political ideology. Since then “Feminism” as a term has become quite familiar in everyday language; it has become almost a fashion, and being called a feminist has assumed a special identity. It implies a diverse collection of sociopolitical theories, political movements and moral philosophies, largely motivated by a concern for co-equal social role and position and rights of women vis-à-vis male members in a society. Therefore Feminism is regarded as the ideology of, or theoretical commitment to, the Women's Liberation Movement across the world.

Feminism, however, is not a coherent ideology. It is a combination of some major traditions developed within feminism. These are Liberal Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Radical Feminism, New Feminism and Post-feminism. The first one (probably the earliest among all such traditions), as the name suggests,

was based on the principle of liberalism that advocated for equality of human individuals regardless of their sex and other distinctions. Thus, it argued for women's equal entitlement to all rights and privileges in the society as enjoyed by men on the basis that both were human beings. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality, and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues.

The majority of Indian tribes are forest-based. In India, forest has been a vital source of civilization, intellectual and spiritual development of human society. In contemporary India, many tribal groups still carry forward with them this vital tradition of living with nature which is expressed in their daily activities and beliefs. Moreover, the relationship between forest and women has been a strong one both in practice and theory. Forest has been associated with fertility. According to Vandana Shiva, the forest as the highest expression of the earth's fertility and productivity and is symbolised in the form as Vana Durga or the Tree Goddess. In many tribal villages in India even today, we can see one or two sacred grooves which are patches of land left uncut when a village is established after

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cutting trees in a forest. Various studies have shown that this reverence for forest or trees is due to an ecological insight that is deep and inherited through many generations (Gadgil 1975). Myers also emphasized this relationship between ecology and community (Myers, 1984). The practice of indigenous knowledge system reflects living in 'harmony' with nature. Some scholars (Guha, 2001) have taken this argument further to expose the indigenous communities' appreciation of nature, which was shaped over generations by living in the forests. In most part of tribal India, women play a very vital role in forest related activities. It is the women who collect raw materials from the forest as well as prepare and sell handia (rice beer) which is considered as a very special drink having ritual significance in many parts of tribal India. The raw material is mohua tree which is found in the forest. Women collect various parts of the mohua tree to use for various purposes. Forest management and knowledge about use of forest produce has been basically a domain of women. Women's participation in tribal economy is crucial and is reflected in their enhanced social status in society. Tribal societies are known for their egalitarianism in contrast to the hierarchical nature of caste society.

Egalitarianism and gender equality are valued in many parts of tribal India but much needs to be done in aspects of gender equality. In the tribes of India, it is usually seen that girls are not considered as a burden because of their economic value. Girls participate in all types of work at home and agricultural activities along with their mothers. In most cases girls and boys have their say in selection of the partners. From this discussion, it is clear that tribal women have comparatively more freedom and higher social status than their counterparts in the caste society. But there are areas where tribal women still face discrimination, for example in property inheritance, village level decision making and certain religious activities. Tribal women play a very vital part in the local as well as household economy by participating along with men in all activities. It is the women who with the assistance of children are largely responsible for animal husbandry and collection of fuel, fodder and water. This permits them considerable time away from home and the village which makes them the explorers of the surrounding natural resources. Thus, women's relationship with forest is very close in the context of the tribes. This also has made them strong and courageous in the

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handling of environmental challenges. The role of tribal women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. Women's role in childbirth, specific, rituals and festivals is an important part of village life. For all these activities forest plays a crucial role by providing various herbs, timbers, medicines and other forest produce. In many cases, tribal women act as the carriers of traditional knowledge on forest management and protection.

Tribal women played a vital role in organizing the resistance movement against their exploitation. Protest originated to counteract any attempt by the outsiders or the state to alienate them from forest, land or any other natural resources they were dependent upon. They had actively participated in various uprisings and struggle against the British during the colonial period. Out of about forty major rebellions against the British from 1763 to 1856, tribals led many of them. The Kol rebellion, the Santhal uprisings, the revolt led by Birsa Munda and many others are known for the massive involvement of tribal women. Struggle against land alienation was the major form of struggle the women were involved with. In the pre-independent India, when the Britishers started to use

the vast forest resources for commercial purpose, there were protests and uprisings by many tribes in which women played crucial role. As British interest in forests was exclusively for commercial timber, indigenous expertise of the tribal women became redundant and was replaced by a one-dimensional, masculinist science of forestry (Shiva, 1988). Since then, women's role in forest economy and as the carrier of forest-related indigenous knowledge has been ignored. British policy on forest led the non-tribal groups, money lenders and commercial minded people to occupy most of the forest land previously possessed by the tribals. This led to active protest, leadership and participation of tribal women in struggle against such exploitation. The voice of tribal women reinforces the notion that the very existence of the tribes is linked with forest and many of the socio-economic activities of the women are directly related to forest and land. The tribal history of resistance can be remembered by three major revolts which time can never erase. After Baba Tilka Majhi, it was the first spell of tribal awakening for freedom and independence from the British Empire. The three revolts are the Kol Revolt in 1829-1839, followed by the Santhal

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Revolt in 1855-1856 and the Munda Revolt in 1899-1900, which is also known as Ulgulan Revolution. The Great Bhagwan Birsa Munda led the Ulgulan revolution. All three revolutions were a victory, and that is the reason the tribals sang the first songs of victory and freedom long before the Independence of 1947.

In the Tebhaga movement in Bengal, there was wide participation of the Santhal women with full spirit and zeal. The Santhal Rebellion from 1855-56, the Bhumkal Rebellion in Bastar and Birsa Munda's Ulgulan movement in and around Ranchi are some examples. The role of women in these adivasi revolts was no less than that of men. They too faced the vicious repression unleashed by the British to crush these movements. These struggles, though, concerned with the immediate economic and existential questions of the tribes, were ultimately related to the policy and rule of the imperialist British. Innumerable adivasi men and women sacrificed their lives in this struggle against the British. The adivasi women have showed exemplary courage and determination to fight against the British and carved their names in the history of the anti-colonial struggle in India.

## **Birsa Movement:**

The movement, better known as Ulgulan (Great Tumult), was led by Birsa Munda in the year 1899. However, the ground of the movement started developing with a religious character from 1895. Herein, Birsa tried to reform the traditional religion (as revealed to him by Singbonga, the supreme god of Munda) and asked his followers to abandon the worship of Bonga (spirit) and to prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food and alcohol. He also predicted the end of the world and ordered his followers to stop paying rent to the government and to stop ploughing. Later on, the movement was imbedded with the political character where the movement looked forward to establish Munda Raj by ousting the missionaries and government by adopting violent means. In 1895, Birsa first grew as a leader and in a short span of time he grew as a healer, then miracle-worker, then preacher and then he grew to become a prophet. (Singh 1983) Altogether, this made him a prominent figure among the tribes (especially among Mundas) who saw him as their liberator. On the other hand, growing popularity of Birsa alerted the colonial regime and they demanded for his immediate arrest. Consequently, he was arrested on 19 November 1895 and was

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sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years with a payment of a fine of Rs 50. (Singh 2010) During his imprisonment period, Ranchi district witnessed severe famine from 1896 to 1897 which was followed by the heavy out-migration of Munda tribe to Assam tea plantation. During the year 1897, there was a heavy increase in the immigration of tribes in Assam tea plantation. Subsequently, this turned out to be the major cause for the Birsa movement. The motive behind the arrest was to control the growing influence of Birsa Munda among the tribes. But even after the arrest, he remained an inspiring force among the tribes through the medium of his disciples. On 30 November 1897, he was released and immediately after his release started organizing meetings in the Munda region. (Singh 2012) Alongside, he continued his revolutionary teachings which lasted for nearly two years. Eventually, there was an outbreak of a violent movement on the Christmas Eve of 1899 at Ranchi district. The movement was short lived as it was cruelly crushed by the officers, who killed many followers of Birsa. On 3 February 1900, Birsa was arrested and with this, the movement also came to an end. Though the movement did not last long, the

impact of the movement was so powerful that it forced the state to take some effective measures to solve the problems of Munda tribes. (Singh 2012) The most effective one was the introduction of Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908. This act was intended to provide a degree of protection to the Chotanagpur tribes by making khuntkatti tenures secure against the encroachment of landlords by fixing their rents in perpetuity and making illegal the sale of these lands for any purpose other than arrears of rent. It also gave statutory recognition to existing customs regarding use of forest, occupancy rights, right to claim land etc. (Gupta 2011)

## **The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908**

This act restricts the passing on of land from tribal people to non-tribals. It acts as a protecting shield for the tribal land, but does it completely protect it? The answer is no. Because there is another law called the Land Acquisition Act 1894, which completely undermines the CNT Act, 1908 and facilitates easy loot of tribal land. In the name of development and public service, dams, factories, roads and railways and canals have been built in Jharkhand, in the process of which 90% of tribals have lost their lands. Cities like Jamshedpur and Ranchi are based on grabbed tribal land.

If the CNT Act has been protecting the tribal lands since 1908, how come non-tribals have successfully built their homes and how come so many mines and industries have been constructed and put into operation on indigenous land? It isn't my job to answer these questions; it is the governments. Land grabbers and invaders will stop at nothing to do what they came for. In 1907, the year before the CNT Act was passed, the Tata Group had already acquired the lands of tribals for mining iron ore in Noamundi and Jamshedpur for establishment of its industrial empire. Jamshedpur at one time was known as "Kalimati" (Land of Black soil) and was home to the Munda, Santhal and Ho tribes, who were forcefully displaced by the dikus (non-tribals), so that their land could be acquired. The non-tribal government tried a number of times to amend the act, and eventually, the Raghobar Das government successfully weakened the act. The government, after the amendment to Section 49, will be able to acquire land in the Chota Nagpur region without anything stopping them

## **Tribal Women's roles in Movements**

Tribal women actively participated in movements and fought against their internal and external subjugations. In the initial phase, external

issues became the key cause for tribal movements, but in the second phase, both external and internal issues were taken up by the movements. This shift can be understood by the emergence of women leaders in tribal resistance. The internal subjugation is more closely related with the patriarchal structure of Oraon and Munda society. In order to understand the internal subjugation, we need to first understand the status of women folk in their patriarchal system. There is a generalized notion regarding the status of tribal women that they enjoyed better socio-economic space compared to the 'mainstream' women. But before coming into any conclusion, we need to keep in mind that in their patriarchal society, they had inefficient political and property rights which were centric to 'power' and that remained under male authority. Though in few cases, women acquired the political post or land ownership for temporary period when their sons were minor. This put a question mark on the position of women in tribal society as they were kept from accessing power. Contrary to this, external subjugation started with the intrusion of moneylenders, traders and middleman in the beginning of colonial era. These intruders dishonored tribal women by harassing and exploiting

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them. This not only threatened the honour and prestige of tribal communities but it also degraded the position of tribal women. Thereby, it became a vital reason for tribal movements. In the beginning phase, violation of women's honour remained the main cause of tribal movements. For example, the immediate cause for Kol rebellion was the exploitation and harassment of women folks by dikus. In this context Kol said, The Pathans have taken our doormats and the Sikhs our sisters. Our lives are of no value, and being of one caste, let us stand fast to each other, and commence to plunder, murder and loot. (Roy 2010)

However, the movement was concerned with safeguarding the honour and prestige of tribal community rather than uplifting the position of women. If we talk in the context of Sardari Ladai, the main cause of the movement was beth-begari system where women were also forced to render their service in the lands of zamindars. For example, "Each house was obliged to supply one male and one woman each day for work." (Kol agitation in the Lohardugga district, Home Department, Judicial, 1890, No. 95-109: 4. NAI) This ultimately made the women folk more prone to mistreatment and harassment, which was considered as

shame for the community. During these two movements, violence against women remained a main cause, but to what extent they participated in these two movements is questionable due to the lack of written sources. In the second phase, women not only actively participated in the movements but in many occasions they also emerged as leaders. In Birsa Movement, one of the main objectives was to restore the golden age of the Mundas and in this regard, one of Birsa Munda's visions was of an ideal society where there was no violence against women. (Singh 2010)

Women remained an important part of tribal movements. In this particular movement, women played a heroic role by taking arms to fight against their enemies. There was an instance when the Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi, on receiving the alarming news rushed to Gaya Munda's (prominent leader of Birsa Movement and a follower of Birsa Munda) house to arrest him but had to face his agitated wife (Manki), the two daughter-in-laws, and the three daughters, Thigi, Nagi and Lembu. They furiously attacked him with lathi, sword, tangi and fought bravely till they were disarmed. Among them, there were two women who had small babies in their left arms while brandishing axes



with their right. (Singh 1983) Apart from them, there were two women named as Sali and Champi who remained a companion of Birsa and stayed with him when he was finally caught. (Sujata Singh 2010) The above three movements were followed by a new episode of resistance termed as Tana Bhagat Movement. Unlike the erstwhile outbreaks, the movement not only witnessed the participation of women in the gatherings held by the leaders but also witnessed two women leaders i.e. Linda Oraon and Maya Oraon, who led the movement in different time period. This ultimately, helped them to improve their political status in tribal resistance and in their society as well.

## Why we need Birsa Munda?

People and the government in power should understand that with great power comes great responsibility and humility, but instead, what we are seeing

is that with more power comes more cruelty, a destructive superiority complex, arrogance and dictatorship. If this is how the government continues to treat the tribals and the speed at which the natural wealth and social culture are being exploited, the tribals will not be saved, and India will never progress with full potentiality. During the Revolt of 1899-1900 Birsa emerged as the supreme leader of the Mundas. Therefore, Bhagwan Birsa Munda is needed again for the tribals to be saved. However, in the world, as we know it now, just one Birsa Munda will not be enough to carry the weight of this responsibility. It's not just Bhagwan Birsa Munda we need. We need Baba Tilka Majhi, Sidhu Kanhu, Chand Bhairav and Phulo Jhano as well. Once again, let's look through the history pages of tribal revolts and learn about something which isn't mentioned in the mainstream literature.

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## Birsa Munda- A Real Freedom Fighter

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### **Introduction:**

In the history of peasant revolt and democratic struggle in India, Birsa Munda was not a sudden flash of light, but a continuation and inevitable consequence of the previous Kol Rebellion (1831-32) and the Santal rebellion (1855-56). The Mundas are indigenous people of the Austrian group. They were the lower classes. Their main livelihood was agriculture and animal husbandry. In central and Eastern India Oraon, Munda, Santal, Birhor, Kol, Vil, Lodha, Sabor and Chenchu, Kurumba, Badama in south India was in this category. The life style of the Mundas accustomed to the primitive social system, was simple, straightforward and independent.

### **The struggle for Independence:**

Birsa Munda was a tribal revolutionary who fought against the British colonialist decades before realizing the presence of Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagatsingh in the freedom struggle. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the British rule, in the history of the Indian independent movement Birsa

made an important figure as tribal leader to have been so honored. With the advent of British rule came Lutherans, Anglican and Catholic missions. With the spread of education along with missionary activities, indigenous peoples became much more organized and rights conscious. At the same time, the social division between Christians and non-Christians have increased, and the sense of ethnic unity has diminished. The advent of Christianity intensified the protest movement among the Mundas. This movement was not aimless; it was dedicated to rebuilding the indigenous society that had collapsed under the pressure of colonial rule.

The British colonial system accelerated the transformation of the tribal agricultural system into a feudal state. Since the tribals could not generate surplus with their primitive technology, so the non-tribal farming community was invited to settle and cultivate the lands in Chhotanagpur. As a result, the lands occupied by the tribals became isolated. The new class of Thikadars were more rapacious and were eager to occupy most

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of them. In 1874, the authority of the old Munda or Oraon chief was almost completely abolished by the peasants introduced by the land Lords. Birsa along with the Munda responded to the challenges of agrarian disruption and cultural change through multiple revolts and rebellions under his leadership.

Birsa took a part in the movement against the acquisition of land in the village by the forest department in 1893-94. In 1895 he declared himself an incarnation of God who came to restore the kingdom of his people. He said that the reign of Queen Victoria was over and the reign of Munda had begun. He also instructed the raiyats not to pay any rent. To the Mundas he was the savior, so they called him “Dharati Aba” or the father of earth. Birsa Munda’s slogan threatening the British Raj –“Abua Raj setarjana, Maharani Raj tundujana” (let the kingdom of the Queen be ended and our kingdom be established.)

The Christian missionaries wanted to arrest Birsa and his followers, who were threatening their ability to make convert. Birsa was sent to jail and after release from jail on January 28, 1898 he along with his followers joined a series of secret meeting in underground for two years. In 1899, Birsa publicly declared that the real enemies were the

British, not Christian Munda, and called for a decisive war against the British. Birsa Munda’s followers started a series of attacks in various loyal places of the British. They attacked two police constables and attacked local shopkeeper’s house and commissioners. The British in return set a reward of Rs. 500/- on Birsa and sent an army of 150 people to crush the rebellion. The army killed hundreds of people in the Dombari Mountain. Birsa was able to flee but later arrested and sent to jail. During his trial in prison, Birsa Munda died on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1900. The movement became faded after his death. After eight years of his death on 1908, the colonial government introduced the chhotanagpur tenancy act (CNA). This law prohibits the transfer of tribal land to non tribal people and protect the rights owned by the owners.

## Struggle for Religious Reform

Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and the hero of the Munda tribe of chhotanagpurplateau. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Birsa stated a tribal religious militant movement in the presidency of Bengal (now Jharkhand). Due to poverty, Birsa was sent to his maternal uncle’s village – Ayubhatu. There he lived for two years and surrounded by Christian missionary. To get admission, he was forced to get

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converted to Christianity. After converting he was renamed as Birsa Daud. During 1886-90 when he stayed at chaibasa in the wake of freedom struggle, his father withdrew him from school. The family also renounced Christianity and reverted to their original tribal religious customs.

Birsa claimed to be the messenger of God and the founder of new religion called 'Birsait'. The religion believed in one God and encouraged them to return to their original religious beliefs. People began to refer to him as an economic healer, a miracle worker, and a preacher. The people of Munda, Oraon, and Kharias gathered to meet the new prophet and to remedy their problems. The people of oraon and Mundas became believers in Birsaities. People started referring to him as "Dharti Aba". Different contemporary and folk music reveals its influence on people of different tribes. Birsa advised the tribal people to follow their original traditional religious system. Impressed by his teaching, he became known as a prophet to the people of the tribe and they sought his blessing.

## Conclusion:

Birsa's activities were essentially a revivalist movement; the main aim of his movement was to liberate Munda

society from foreign elements and give it its original form. The purpose of the Birsa was to achieve religious and political freedom. His main goal was to establish the rights of the Mundas as the real owners of the land. According to Birsa, only this right can be established in the European influence free world, and for that needed Munda Raj. However, his struggle was not only against the British, but also the ignorance of his community. He wanted to liberate the Munda community from superstition, animal abandonment and alcoholism. He died in the custody of British authorities at Ranchi central jail when he was just 25 years old.

Birsa is still memorable to us as a struggling star. Remembering his memory various institutions and organizations have developed in different parts of India after independence. Many institutions and organizations – Birsa Agricultural University, Birsa Institute of Technology, Birsa College Khunti, Birsa Institute of Technology Sindri, Sidhu Kanho Birsa University, Birsa Munda Athletics Stadium, Birsa Munda Airport, Birsa Seva Dal, Birsa Munda Tribal University – are named after him. In 2004, Ashok Saran made a hindi film "Ulgulan-Ek Kranti", In 2008 Iqbal Saran made a n another film "Gandhi Se

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Pehle Gandhi”, Mahasweta Devi wrote a British Raj. One hundred and fifty feet tall statue of Birsa Munda has been created in Jharkhand in 2016.

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# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## The Indian Tribal Community Folk Hero- Birsa Munda

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### **Introduction:**

The Munda rebellion was one of the most tribal revolts in India under colonial rule, and one of the heroes of this rebellion was Birsa Munda. He was not only a brave leader of the Munda rebellion but he was one of the leading figures in India because the mass uprising of the indigenous community was possible only through his hands. To the people of the tribal community, he was a pioneer of the Renaissance, so his followers considered him an 'Earthly God'.

### **Birsa Munda's first life:**

On 15 November 1875 in the village of Ulihatu (at present khundi District in Jharkhand state) in the presidency of Bengal, Birsa Munda was born. His father's name was Suguna Munda and mother's name was Kormi hata Munda. Birsa Munda had five siblings. His elder brother's name was Komta Munda and younger brother's name was Posna Munda. His two sisters' names were Daskir Munda and Champa Munda. Birsa Munda spent his first life in the village chhalkad with his parents.

His first schooling took place in the village of Dalka. He had a keen interest in studies since childhood and he was always trying to learn something new. After completing his primary education, Birsa Munda was admitted to the Chaibasa missionary school. Ever since he was in missionary school, he has been thinking about how to liberate his society from the clutches of the British rules. He converted to Christianity while attending the missionary school in chaibasa and his name was Birsa David and after that his name was Birsa Daud.

### **The Initial Context of the Rebellion:**

From 1886 to 1890 Birsa Munda spent his life at the chaibasha missionary school. It was during this time that violent protests broke out between German and Roman Catholics, Sugna Munda resigned as a member of the German mission in 1890 and moved with his family to his indigenous religion in the face of the fire of the freedom struggle that engulfed the indigenous people at this time. Birsa never thought that he would ever join the movement as a leader of the tribal community because

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his teenage life was so different. In teenage life Birsa Munda is a very beautiful flute player. He used to walk around with ektara in one hand and flute in his waist. But in the cruel irony of fate, Ektara left the flute and picked up the bow and arrow in his hand to save nature and society. While in missionary school Birsa Munda became associated with the sardari movement. From that experience he realised that not only British rule but also Indians were responsible for this condition of the indigenous community. So they have become expatriates from their own homes. So he realised that first he had to awaken his own nation and he did it skillfully.

## **Establishment of new religion:**

He began to advising the people of the indigenous community to adopt their own culture, their own religion and their own right. In this way while awaking the masses Birsa Munda became the 'Dharti Abha' or 'Early God' to the people of tribal community. Birsa Munda founded a new religion at the age of 20 based on the monotheistic Munda religion.

## **The Beginning of the Munda Rebellion (first stage):**

In order to build a feudal stage under the British colonial rule, the British occupied various forest and land one by

one and to this end they enacted the Forest Act of 1894 prohibiting the free access of other people to the forest areas. Through this law, they took away their motherland from the people of the indigenous community. As a result the entire jungle and the mountain along with the heroic martyr forces and the people of their tribal communities jumped into fight for their rights, with courage and bow and arrows. The tribal community started fighting with the British Forces. The British government could not handle the situation and in 1895 arrested the rebels including Birsa Munda. The movement came to a temporary halt after the arrest of Birsa Munda.

## **The second phase of Munda Movement:**

The second phase of the Munda movement began after the release of Birsa Munda on 30th November 1897. The Munda rebellion in the southern region of Ranchi spread from 1899 to 1900 under the leadership of Birsa Munda. This rebellion is known in history as 'Ulgulan' in Mundari language. The word 'Ulgulan' means strong rebellion. The aim of this revolt was to establish the Munda Kingdom and to establish forest rights. The main centre of this movement was the dombari hill. This

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movement was carried out through guerrilla tactics. For two years they attacked places which were loyal to the British.

On 5th January 1900 Birsa's followers killed a constable at Ethedin. On 7 January They attacked khunti police station and killed a constable and razed the houses of local shopkeepers. The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner rushed to Khunti with an army of 150 to crush the rebellion. The British administration set a reward of Rs 500 for Birsa Munda. The British force attacked Munda guerrillas at Dombari hill, indiscriminately firing on and killing hundreds of people. Birsa escaped to the hills of Singhbhum. He was arrested at Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur on 30 March 1900. But behind the capture of Birsa Munda was the betrayal of some tribals for whom he fought all the while.

## **Death of Birsa Munda:**

After Birsa Munda was caught his trial began. According to Deputy Commissioner Ranchi 460 tribals were made accused in 15 different criminal cases, out of which 63 were convicted. One was sentenced to death, 39 to transportation for life and 23 to be imprisoned for terms up to 14 years. There were 6 deaths including that of

Birsa Munda in the prison. Birsa Munda died in the jail on 9 June 1900 at the age of 25 years.

However, historians believe that there is a mystery about the death of Birsa Munda. Many historians believe that Birsa Munda died of food poisoning but according to the jail report, Birsa died due to blood poisoning and diarrhoea. Although the practice of burying dead bodies was prevalent among the tribal community, the British government hastily cremated Birsa's body. Because firstly they wanted to cover up the mystery of Birsa's death and secondly they wanted to explain that Birsa is not 'GOD', but an ordinary person. However, the British government did not succeed in that purpose. Birsa Munda is still worshipped as 'GOD' by the people of tribal community.

## **Conclusion:**

Although the Munda uprising ceased after the death of Birsa Munda, it was of immense importance to the whole of India including the tribal community. Though this movement did not establish the Munda kingdom, the practice of forced labour by the British with the aboriginal people ceased. Judging from many angles, Professor Norohori Kobiraj called The Munda revolt a 'present revolt'. Indigenous people celebrate



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Birsa Munda's birthday on November 15<sup>th</sup> every year to commemorate his contribution. Birsa Munda is the only one person from the tribal community, whose picture has been and will be carefully and respectfully preserved in the museum of

the Indian parliament. The history of his heroism, adventure and love for Nature will be unforgettable to the entire indigenous community, the people of India.

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## Birsa Munda: Relevance of Thoughts & Message to the Tribal Community

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### **Introduction:**

Birsa Munda was a tribal freedom fighter and a folk hero belongs to the Munda tribe. Birsa Munda was born on 15 November 1875, at Ulihatu, Bengal Presidency, during British India (present-day Khunti district, Jharkhand) on a Thursday and was named after the day of his birth according to the Munda custom. According to folk songs, he used to play in the sand and dust with his friends. He was an expert in playing the flute and used to carry an instrument made from pumpkin.

In his childhood, Munda was encircled by Christian missionaries. His schooling took place in a missionary school. He was very sharp in studies where his teacher Jaipal Nag guided him to enrol in the German Mission School. Birsa converted to Christianity to join German Mission School since it was compulsory to convert to Christianity to join the school and was renamed as Birsa David, which he later changed to Birsa

Daud. Nevertheless, soon after he realized that the Britishers were there to colonize them and the missionaries were trying to convert tribals to Christianity. When he was in school, the German and Roman Catholic Christian agitation was at its peak. This made his father, Sugana Munda, withdraw his son from the school. Birsa Munda left the German Mission School, gave up the religion and returned to his traditional faith.

Munda united the tribals to fight against the forceful land grabbing carried out by the British government which would turn the tribals into bonded labourers and force upon them miserable poverty. Birsa Munda started to pass on the principles of Hindu religion and advised converted tribal people to read their original religious system thoroughly. He became such an important figure that tribal people used to seek his blessings. He was valued as a God by his followers and looked upon as a prophet.

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## Relevance of Thoughts:

*“We should never forget our original tribal culture.”*

—Birsa Munda

Birsa started a movement called 'Ulgulan', or 'The Great Tumult'. His struggle against the exploitation and discrimination against tribals led to a big hit against the British government in the form of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act being passed in 1908. The act restricted the passing on of land from the tribal people to non-tribals. He fought for the rights of the tribal community.

Munda set out to get rid of the feudal system that the British had introduced in the *Adivasi* forest land. He fought for the rights of his people. Birsa Munda was given the name, '*Dharti Abba*' or the 'Father of the Earth'. He is the god for the tribal communities like The Mundas, Oraons, and Kharias. He went on to form a new religion called *Birsait*, which adored only one god. His revolutionary work not only put an effective consequence in the British rule, but it also helped to mobilize the tribals.

Birsa has an astounding contributor to modern India, but he has also unfortunately been excluded to the scene in today's times. It is also considered that his period of stay in Chaibasa proven to be a turning point in

his life, specifically between 1886 & 1894. It was when Birsa began his activity to take part in movements against the British for the rights of the tribals. Birsa was bold in acting on the need of the hour and taking the all-important initiative to fight the oppressors. Birsa went on to find a spiritual way of life and assumed as a religious master at a very young age. For his people, he was a God.

Clarity of thought is another aspect from Birsa's life. Once when his tribal community was visited by a Christian priest, Birsa was 11 at the time, taught the visiting Christian priest a lesson or two by putting into perspective how following one's religion was about practising individual choice and this was not to be cast-off as mere superstition. Birsa Munda was a visionary leader whose own experiences allowed him to understand how the people from his community were suffering. He did not only attempt to wage protests and lead anti-colonial movements, but pictured a basic trauma in the historical continuity of oppression, dominance and exploitation. In fact, his struggle left such a mental picture on the colonial state that officials were forced to introduce new legislation – the **Chota Nagpur Tenancy**

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**Act** – that guaranteed the protection of the Munda's land rights.

## **Message to the Tribal Community:**

Birsa's life is a message for us to take out some time to visit those parts of India where the community lives — to understand its composition and what keeps it going even today in these times of cultural dilution. It is because of his efforts all those years ago that this tribe can live with their heads held high today. His vision for his Munda community was to trace their roots and ethos back, and as a result, a whole section of society benefited. '*Dharti Abba*' or the Earth Father, Birsa Munda emphasized the need of the tribals to study their own religion and not forget their cultural roots. He inspired his people to realize the value of owning their land and asserting their right upon them.

Birsa Munda always stressed upon the need for tribals to know their rights, culture and fight against the injustice done to them. He also worked towards rationalizing his community and getting rid of their superstitious beliefs, animal sacrifice and alcoholism. Birsa wanted to reform the tribal society and so, he urged them to let go of beliefs in witchcraft and instead, stressed on the importance of prayer, staying away from

alcohol, hold faith on God and observing a code of conduct.

With religious perspective, Munda started the faith of 'Birsait'. This was a threat to Christian missionaries who were converting the tribals left and right. Soon, the Mundas and Oraons became devoted Birsaities. Birsa Munda declared that God had appointed him to save his people from trouble, to free them from the slavery of *dikus* (foreigners, robbers). Politically a movement began under the leadership of Birsa known as 'Birsa Movement'. The political aims of it were to drive out Christian missionaries, moneylenders, Hindu landlords, and the government, and to establish a *Munda Raj*. In this way he conveyed the message to compete boldly with external power and to live their lives with dignity and freedom, not with slavery.

When Birsa was arrested in 1895, and in 1897, after releasing he toured the villages to gather support for his movement. He urged people to destroy the *Ravanas* (European devils) and set up an independent kingdom under his leadership. He used to say:

*"Let the kingdom of the queen be ended and our kingdom is established."*

## **Conclusion:**

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Birsa Munda's vision for his Munda community was to trace their roots and ethos back, and as a result, a whole section of society advantaged. Thus, let me conclude by the point that the message of Munda to the tribal community is 'to unit and fight for their rights and against injustice, live with dignity and freedom which is every

person's birth right. Keep faith in their own religion as it is the choice of individual, not a compulsion of any powerful forces. Get rid of superstitious beliefs, animal's sacrifice and alcoholism. Worship of only one God, importance of praying. Love for their country and land.'

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## Birsa Munda-The Lion

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### Early Life of Birsa:

Birsa's early years were spent with his parents at Chalakkad. His early life could not have been very different from that of an average Munda child. Folklore refers to his rolling and playing in sand and dust with his friends and his growing up strong and handsome in looks; he grazed sheep in the forest of Bohonda. When he grew up, he shared an interest in playing the flute, in which he became an expert. He went around with the tuila, the one-stringed instrument made from the pumpkin, in the hand and the flute strung to his waist. Exciting moments of his childhood were spent on the akhara (the village wrestling ground). Driven by poverty Birsa was taken to Ayubhatu, his maternal uncle's village. Komta Munda, his eldest brother, who was ten years of age, went to Kundi Bartoli, entered the service of a Munda, married and lived there for eight years,

and then joined his father and younger brother at Chalked. At Ayubhatu Birsa lived for two years. He went to school at Salga, run by one Jaipal Nag. He accompanied his mother's younger sister, Joni, who was fond of him.

Birsa came in contact with a Christian missionary who visited a few families in the village which had been converted to Christianity and attacked the old Munda order. During that period only one supported to retain the Munda family is Sharanya Mathaji who has a special power of healing and fulfills the desires of the public. As he was sharp in studies, Jaipal Nag recommended him to join German Mission School but, converting to Christianity was compulsory to join the school and Birsa thus converted to Christianity and was renamed as Birsa David, which later became as Birsa Daud. After studying for a few years, he left the German Mission School.

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## **Formative Period for Birsa:**

Birsa's long stay at Chaibasa from 1886 to 1890 constituted a formative period of his life. This period was marked by the German and Roman Catholic Christian agitation. In light of the freedom struggle, Sugana Munda withdrew his son from the school. Soon after leaving Chaibasa in 1890 Birsa and his family gave up their membership of the German mission and ceased to be Christian and reverted to his original traditional tribal religious system. In Singhbhum as in Palamau and Manbhum, the forest settlement operations were launched and measures were taken to determine the rights of the forest-dwelling communities. Villages in forests were marked off in blocks of convenient size consisting not only of village sites but also cultivable and wastelands sufficient of the needs of villages. In 1894, Birsa had grown up into a strong young man, shrewd and intelligent, and undertook the work of repairing the Dombari tank at Gorbera damaged by rains.

While on a sojourn in the neighborhood of village Sankara in Singhbhum, he found a suitable companion, presented her parents with jewels, and explained to her his idea of marriage. Later, on his return from jail, he did not find her faithful to him and left her. Birsa stressed mono-gamy at a later stage in his life. Birsa rose from the lowest ranks of the peasants, the ryots, who unlike their namesakes elsewhere enjoyed far fewer rights in the Mundari khuntkatti system. While all privileges were monopolized by the members of the founding lineage, the ryots were no better than crop-sharers. Birsa's own experience as a young boy, driven from place to place in search of employment, gave him an insight into the agrarian question and forest matters. He was no passive spectator but an active participant in the movement going on in the neighborhood.

## **New Religion:**

Birsa's claim to be a messenger of God and the founder of a new religion sounded preposterous to the missionaries. There were also within his sect converts from Christianity, mostly Sardars. His simple system of the offering was directed against the church which levied a tax. The concept of one God appealed to his people who found his religion and economical religion healer, a miracle-

worker, and a preacher spread. The Mundas, Oraons, and Kharias flocked to Chalkad to see the new prophet and to be cured of their ills. Both the Oraon and Munda population up to Barwari and Chechari in Palamau became convinced Birsaities. Contemporary and later folk songs commemorate the tremendous impact of Birsa on his people, their joy, and expectations at his advent. The name of Dharti Aba was on everybody's lips. A folk song in Sadani showed that the first impact cut across the lines of caste. Hindus and Muslims also flocked to the new Sun of religion. Birsa Munda started to advise tribal people to pursue their original traditional tribal religious system. Impressed by his teachings, he became a prophet figure to the tribal people and they sought his blessings.

## **Tribal Movement:**

Birsa Munda's slogan threatening the British Raj- Abua raj seter Jana, Maharani Raj Kundu Jana ("Let the kingdom of the queen be ended and our kingdom is established.") is remembered today in areas of Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. He met people in old Mysore and Mandy in Karnataka and Arakkvalley in Vishakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh. The British colonial system intensified the transformation of the tribal agrarian

system into a feudal state. As the tribals with their primitive technology could not generate a surplus, the non-tribal peasantry was invited by the chiefs in Chhotanagpur to settle on and cultivate the land. This led to the alienation of the lands held by the tribals. The new class of Thikadars was of a more rapacious kind and eager to make the most of their possessions.

In 1856 Jagirs stood at about 600, and they held from a village to 150 villages. But by 1874, the authority of the old Munda or Oraon chiefs had been almost entirely annulled by that of the farmers, introduced by the landlords. In some villages, they had completely lost their proprietary rights and had been reduced to the position of farm labourers. To the twin challenges of agrarian breakdown and culture change, Birsa along with the Munda responded through a series of revolts and uprisings under his leadership. In 1895, in Chalakkad village of Tamar, Birsa Munda renounced Christianity, asked his fellow tribesmen to worship only one God and give up the worship of bongos.

He declared himself a prophet who had come to recover the lost kingdom of his people. He said that the reign of Queen Victoria was over and the Munda Raj had begun. He gave orders to



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the raiyats (tenant farmers) to pay no rents. The Mundas called him Dharati Aba, the father of earth. Due to a rumor that those who didn't follow Birsa would be massacred, Birsa was arrested and sentenced to two-year imprisonment. On 28 January 1898, after being released from jail he went with his followers to Chutia to collect the record and to reestablish racial links with the temple. He said that the temple belonged to the Kols. The Christian missionaries wanted to arrest Birsa and his followers, who were threatening their ability to make converts. Birsa went underground for two years but attending a series of secret meetings. During this period he visited the Jagarnath temple.

It is said that around 7000 men and women assembled around Christmas of 1899, to herald the Ulgulaan (revolution) which soon spread to Khunti, Tamar, Basia, and Ranchi. The Anglican Mission at Murhu and the Roman Catholic Mission at Sarwada were the main targets. The Birsais openly declared that the real enemies were the British and not Christian Mundas and called for a decisive war against the British. For two years, they attacked places loyal to the British.

On 5 January 1900, Birsa's followers killed two constables at Etkedih. On 7 January, they attacked Khunti Police station, killed a constable, and razed the houses of local shopkeepers. The commissioner, A. Fobes, and deputy commissioner, H.C. Streattfield, rushed to Khunti with an army of 150 to crush the rebellion. The British administration set a reward of Rs 500 for Birsa. The British forces attacked Munda guerillas at Dumbari Hill, indiscriminately firing on and killing hundreds of people. Birsa escaped to the hills of Singhbhum. He was arrested at the Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur on 3 March 1900. According to Deputy Commissioner Ranchi, vide letter, 460 tribals were made accused in 15 different criminal cases, out of which 63 were convicted. One was sentenced to death, 39 to transportation for life, and 23 to imprison for terms of up to fourteen years. There were six deaths, including that of Birsa Munda in the prison during trials. Birsa Munda died in the jail on 9 June 1900.



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## Achievements:

After his death, the movement faded out. However, in 1908 the colonial government introduced the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) which prohibits the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. The Forest Laws enforced by the British laid many restrictions on the villagers depended on the forests and the tribals alike. The villagers could only collect produce from the village forests and not from the protected or reserved forests. The British broadened their control over all forests and pronounced that woods were state property. The tribals were not permitted to gather wood, natural products, hunt, and work on moving development in these forests. This brought about the loss of job and the loss of source of food among the tribals.

Birsa Munda was a great Indian tribal freedom fighter who made a remarkable contribution to promoting tribal rights. He fought bravely for the independence of the Mundas against the British. The British wanted tribal groups to settle down and become peasant cultivators because as settled peasants they were easier to

control and administer. The British also wanted a regular revenue source for the state. During the period, 1886 to 1890, Birsa Munda spent a large amount of time in Chaibasa which was close to the Centre of the Sardar Vallabhai Patel's agitation. The activities of the Sardars had a strong impact on the mind of the young Birsa, who soon became a part of the anti-missionary and anti-government program. By the time he left Chaibasa in 1890, Birsa was strongly entrenched in the movement against the British oppression of the tribal communities.

## Conclusion:

Though Birsa Munda lived a short span of life and the fact that the movement died out soon after his death, Birsa Munda is known to have mobilised the tribal community against the British and had also forced the colonial officials to introduce laws protecting the land rights of the tribals. Birsa's achievements as a young tribal revolutionary have continued to be celebrated over decades now and he has successfully carved out a space for himself in popular and folk literature, academia, and mass media.

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## Rethinking the Relevance of Birsa Munda in the History of Tribal Movement with Reference to the Impact on the Minds of Tribal Population

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### **Introduction:**

The life history of Birsa Munda will go down in the history of the tribals as a story of emancipation of his own people, who were subjected to prolonged suppression by the British. He realized that the British have come to this land to torture the masses and carry wealth abroad. He is reckoned as a freedom fighter who led the tribals essentially to prevent land grabbing by the non-tribals ending them up as bonded laborers in their own land. Birsa Munda was an Indian freedom fighter and a tribal leader who revolted against the British rule. He was a visionary who played a crucial role in liberation of his community, the tribal people, who were exposed to persistent dominance by the British exploitative policies and atrocities. His own experiences as a young boy, when he traveled from one place to another in search of work provided him with an understanding of different matters from

which the community was suffering due to the British oppression.

After realizing the fact that the British company arrived in India to torture the people and carry the wealth abroad, Birsa Munda started spreading awareness to expose the agenda of British and gathered his army of tribals. The army responded with movements and protests against the injustice and treachery of the British Raj. He was an active participant in the revolt and is remembered as a relentless fighter who possessed the courage to fight the British. He also claimed himself to be a messenger of the almighty and told his followers to follow the concept of One God. His influential personality and motivational speeches encouraged the public to believe in the power of freedom, to dream of a different world than the one they lived in. His efforts for the restoration of full ownership rights of tribals exemplified his leadership and vision.

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## **Birsa Munda and his new religion:**

Birsa Munda was also a founder of a new religion called Birsait. The religion believed in one God and encouraged them to revert to their original religious beliefs. People started referring to him as an economical religion healer, a miracle-worker and a preacher. People belonging to the tribe of Mundas, Oraons and Kharias moved together to visit the new prophet and to find a solution to their problems. People started referring him Dharti Abba or Father of the Earth, Birsait soon became the popular religion. Several contemporary and folk songs reveal his influence over the people of various tribes. Birsa Munda stressed the need of the tribals to understand their own cultural roots, tradition and rights and follow their traditions. In 1895, Birsa asked his fellow tribesman to renounce Christianity and guided them to worship one God and showed them the path of purity, austerity and prohibited cow-slaughters. Through his religion, Birsa Munda also preached a strong anti-British sentiment and mobilised thousands of tribal folk to form guerrilla armies to attack the Raj. His slogan threatening the British Raj is still remembered today in the states of Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya

Pradesh. The slogan was “Abua raj seterjana, maharani raj tundujana” which means “Let the kingdom of the queen be ended and our kingdom will be established.”

## **Birsait and revolts:**

In the late 1890s, Birsa Munda abolished the feudal system introduced by the British in the Adivasi forest. Under this system, migrants from other states were invited by the British to work over tribal lands and to pocket all the profits. This, in turn, deprived the owners of their proprietary rights over the land and was left with no means of livelihood. Thus, due to the agrarian breakdown and culture change, Birsa along with his tribe revolted. He invoked the tribals to take pride of their ancestor’s patriotism and to maintain their cultural ethos. The tribals were suppressed for long by the Dikus (nontribals) and the intermediaries like Thikadars and money lenders including Zamindars tried to exploit the tribals constantly.

The tribals who were for centuries the owners of the land and engaged in cultivation could not stand the trials before the British Court and the primitive practice of verbal agreement on land ownership could not be recognised by law. Finally the tribals ended themselves up as bonded labourers in

their own land of origin. The level of discontentment which grew out of sustained discontentment struck at the very root of their age-old customs and practices. Against this background, Birsa organised his struggle to free the tribal folk from the brink of survival and he commenced his protest march on 1st October 1894 for remission of forest dues. He gave his clarion call to the tribals in his own language meaning he wanted the tribals to end the rule of the queen and re-establish their own kingdom. Birsa accordingly spearheaded the tribal movement in the region of Chhotanagpur and brought the tribal community under a single umbrella. He had organised his first protest march for remission of forest dues. It was at this time the great famine of 1895 broke out.

### **Impact of this movement:**

Colonial intervention brought significant changes to many of the societies. Schneider argues the imposition of colonial rule had an immediate effect on tribal population in India. The authority of former chiefs was considerably reduced and the economic basis of the kingly, or the chiefly, power was undermined or destroyed, though not in equal measure in all areas. The impact of this movement was significant enough that even the British Government that

suppressed it, recognised its gravity. This was reflected in the secret report of the then Lt. Governor who wrote, “The disturbance may have quieted down but Simla requires to be constantly reminded that it is sitting on a powder magazine.” The popularity, intensity and relevance of the movement launched by Birsa Munda were so widespread that all the mainstream political groups supported it and eulogised its contributions to arouse the common people to stand against the mighty British Empire. The awakening triggered by Birsa Munda found its manifestation in the formation of Kisan Sabha by many tribal groups, which later joined the struggle for freedom. The then British Government was perplexed by the willing and large-scale participation of women in the agitation launched by Birsa.

Birsa Munda stood out as an early protagonist of tribal rights, a pioneer in mobilising women for the cause of freedom and as an irrepressible fighter for justice and human dignity. His movement launched in late 19th century has significance for our own times. He used the myths and symbols of his society and culture and became a rallying point for people to rise against foreign rule, oppression and injustice. His movement was also infused with the

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spirit of religious reform, social justice and cultural regeneration. He fought against British rule, suffered imprisonment and subsequently became a martyr. The Bihar Regiment of the Indian Army invokes his name in one of their battle cries. The British authorities suppressed Birsa Munda's struggle. But it did not go in vain. His fight for the rights of the people for forest resources, land and preservation of their distinct identity was subsequently recognised when the then British Government, through a series of measures, guaranteed tribals right to reclaim their land and empowered officials to forcefully evict the occupation of tribal land by others. Eight years after his death in 1908, the colonial government introduced the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT). This Act prohibited the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals and protected the proprietary rights of the owners. The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which partially protected the rights of tribals, is considered as an important outcome of Birsa Munda's fight. The arduous fight of Birsa Munda against British rule and its ramifications found articulation in the larger context of our struggle for independence when Surendranath Banerjee took up the issue in the Legislative Council and many

other leading newspapers of the period editorially supported its cause.

## Conclusion:

Today our tribals, in all parts of our country, are fighting for their inalienable rights to land, forest resources and cultural identity. In all such fights, we find an echo of BirsaMunda's strivings. BirsaMunda awakened the masses and fought against the predatory tendencies in the name of modernization and the oppressive Zamindari system that was plagued the Adivasi lands in Jharkhand and Bihar invoking the spirit of tribal order characterized by simplicity, the absence of tyranny, and living in harmony with nature. More than a century later, Munda's legacy still lives on, especially in Bihar, Jharkhand and parts of Karnataka and Odisha. His revolutionary work not only put an effective dent in the British rule, it also helped mobilise tribals. It is due to him and many other such activists that tribals in India have a fighting chance at protecting their rights. Today our tribal brothers and sisters are heroically standing against the forces so-called modernisation which runs antithetical to their lifestyle, and understanding of nature and culture. They resist the alarming deterioration of environment as they are the protectors and preservers of

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“Jal, Jungle and Jantu” and draw our attention to the need for re-examining our concepts of development and progress. They underline the need for truly sustainable development projects. Since the days of our struggle for

independence, we have taken steps to guarantee the rights of our tribal brothers and sisters. Our Constitution, the fundamental law of the land, stipulates the provisions for their upliftment.

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## Birsa Munda: Reforming the Tribal Society

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### Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Bhagat Singh, Lal Bahadur Shastri- these are the few names which often come to our mind when we think of Indian freedom struggle. But there are thousands of unsung heroes who have been forgotten by history. One such unsurpassed freedom fighter was Birsa Munda who played a leading role in fighting for the rights of tribal community and astounded Britishers with his daring moves and became their hero. Born on 15 November 1875 in a small Ulihatu village of Kunti district in Jharkhand, he spent much of his childhood moving from one village to another with his parents. The movement started by him in Chota Nagpur Plateau made him a great personality of Indian history of Independence Movement (Singh 1983). Birsa not only fought the battle against Britishers intelligently but also supported the munda community and helped abolish the feudal system that plagued the Adivasi lands in Jharkhand and Bihar. He guided his followers not to

pay rent for their lands as they are free. Birsa Munda's achievements are known to be more remarkable by the fact that he came to acquire them before he was 25. The state of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in 2000 due to impact on national movement. He is the only tribal leader whose portrait is displayed in Parliament.

### Birsa As A Reformer:

Birsa has been visualised as a rebellion because he ensured the protection of the Munda land rights. He helped the people of his tribe and thus reformed their lives by infusing the principles of respect, love, support and thus protecting the lands from outsiders. He is still remembered in the form of 'Teachings of Birsa' by the tribal. His teachings are an eye opener for all. This Adivasi leader commanded a revolt at the end of the 19th century against the dikus (outsiders) popularly known as Birsa Ulgulan (tumult, rebellion). The movement targeted British officials, zamindars, and missionaries. One of the

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immediate effects of the movement emerged in the form of protectionary legislation Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act passed in 1908 and later played an influential role in the making of Jharkhand.

## **Birsa as a prophet:**

In his urge to reform the tribal society, he stressed on the importance of prayer. He insisted his people to have faith in god and observe a code of conduct. Birsa, a new religion was created by Birsa. The religion believed in only one god. Due to his growing influence on tribals, the Birsa soon became popular religion among Mundas and Orans. This proved to be a threat to Christian missionaries who were converting the tribals. He encouraged his followers to get back to their tribal roots and follow their traditions. For this he was named as 'Dharti Abba' or 'Father of the Earth.'

## **Birsa as Tribal Warrior:**

Birsa mobilised thousands of tribal folks to form guerrilla armies to protest against British Raj. As a result of his efforts in 1890s feudal system, which was introduced by the British in the Adivasi forest land, came to an end. Birsa was a political visionary who could be exemplified through his attempts to organise not only against the British Raj

but also against missionaries and the Zamindars. He developed a political vision through his vast experience of the colonisers' practices. Birsa began to instil a political consciousness among his followers. He also had to face jail more frequently due to his activism.

In the contemporary social and political landscape, the presence of Birsa Munda in the form of the built environment such as statue is indelible and offers an exciting opportunity to understand the new aesthetic turn (Ranjan and Rahul 2020). His birth anniversary, November 15, is still celebrated by tribal people in Karnataka. Official functions are conducted at his Samadhi Sathal in the capital of Jharkhand. It is difficult to encapsulate the legacy he left behind. Many organisations have been named after him such as Birsa Munda Airport Ranchi, Birsa Institute of Technology Sindri, Birsa Munda Vanvasi Chattravas, Sidho Kanho Birsha University, Purulia, and Birsa Agricultural University. Birsa converted to Christianity to join German Mission School since it was compulsory to convert to Christianity to join the school and was renamed as Birsa David, which he later changed to Birsa Daud. Birsa Munda started to propagate the principles of Hindu religion and advised

converted tribal people to read their original religious system thoroughly. He became such an important figure that tribal people used to seek his blessings (Hoffman 2005).

## **Birsa as Father of Earth:**

Birsa renounced Christianity and left the German Mission School when he realised the brutal behaviour of Britishers towards Indians. He spent much time in Jharkhand during the time period of 1886 and 1890 and was deeply hurt and started agitation against British rule. Under this influence he emphasized on worshipping single God and encouraged the tribalism to stay connected to their roots and strictly follow their own traditions.

## **Unsung Hero Whose Story Must Be Told:**

Many states and parts in India are not aware of the bravery and teachings of this great freedom fighter but this tribal hero has memorials, educational institutes and airports with his name in the Jharkhand state. Birsa Munda is a subaltern personality who ensured that we Indians have the ability to fight against any type of tyranny. He was having the ability of skilled leader with feelings for masses and love for the country. He was an ideal example of a firm and rigid personality being loved by all. Heroic deeds of Birsa have forced us

to think giant and enabled the masses to promptly attack whenever they faced cultural imperialism. Personalities like him are not just meant to be seen as idols, but more significantly, as ideals. He has inspired thousands with his respective communities and is an unsung hero whose story must be told. His contributions towards Indian Freedom movement are unmatched and remarkable in spite of struggling with adverse circumstances of basic living.

Birsa addressed a magnificent anti-British army and militarised thousands of tribal folks to form guerrilla armies to attack the British Raj. When his guerrilla army was battling with British during Feb 1900, he got detained in Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur and was declared dead on 9<sup>th</sup> June. Birsa died of cholera in Ranchi jail when he was caught on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1900 but it is said that he might have been killed by Britishers. In such a short lifespan he changed the mindset of tribal people and made them battle ready and were fortified by their rights and welfare (Ecka and Sunny 2016) and after a decade of his death the British introduced the CNT Act (Chotta Nagpur Tenancy) in which the tribal land was not allowed to be transferred to non tribals

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In the late 1890s, Munda set out to eradicate the feudal system that the British had announced in the Adivasi forest land. The British invited migrants from other states to come and take charge of work on tribal land, while they pocketed all the profits under this system. This resulted in the land owners to left behind bereft of land and other means of living. His revolutionary work not only put an effective dent in the British rule, it also helped mobilise tribals. Munda was ray of hope. He not only enlightened the tribal lives but also became an idol of tribal unity which still persists in them even after his demise.

## Conclusion:

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## Contribution of the Birsa Munda to the Indian National Freedom Struggle

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### Introduction:

The advent of the British Colonial Rule gave birth to the exploitative apparatus in India. The destruction of the age-old founded system and the emergence of the new exploitative and dominant system was the outcome of the colonialism. Birsa Munda belongs to the region of Chhota Nagpur. The region falls under the Bengal Presidency in the 19th century during the British Colonial Rule. The achievement of the Birsa Munda may be divided into three sections. He worked to shape the religious, political and cultural mindsets of his followers and prepared them for Ulgulaan.

### Religious views:

Birsa Munda took his early education from Naga. Later on he admitted to the German Mission School where he had been converted to Christianity. Due to poverty Birsa had to move towards the maternal village

Ayubhatu. There was dominance of the Christian missionaries. He adopted Christianity to get admission in the German School. He was baptized as Birsa David. After few years Birsa left German Mission School and settled in Chaibasa. He renounced polygamy and emphasised the monogamy. He established Birsait order, a new religion which emphasised the importance of the faith in one God. The people belonging to the Munda, oraon and kharias expressed their gratitude by reverting to Birsait. They called him as Dharti Abba. The followers of Birsa renounced Christianity and adopted Birsait. Birsa opposed the superstition prevalent in Adivasis. The tenets of the Birsait order are very simple. He believes in one God. He tries to destroy their superstition.

### Political views:

The British Colonial Government introduced The Forest Act 1882 which deprived the tribals from their indigenous

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right over the forest. Birsa Munda was Dharti Abba for the tribals. He encouraged his fellows by giving a slogan:

Abua Raj Seter Jana, Maharani Raj  
Tundur Jana

("Let the kingdom of the queen end and  
our kingdom be established")

He used to speak fearlessly before the Christian Missionaries. He wanted to save the rights of his people who were deprived by the Landlords, British and by Christian Missionaries. The Adivasis selected him unanimously as their leader. He was aware about the pitiable condition of his fellowmen. The exploitation and miseries of the Adivasis compelled him to wage a war against the Landlords and British. On one hand the Landlords used to exploit them and on the other hand the Christian Missionaries were killing the rebellion spirit of the Adivasis. He discouraged Adivasis from converting in to Christianity. Birsa was of the opinion that the forefathers of the Adivasis had cleared the forest and turned them into a cultivable land, but the Landlords forcefully grabbed the land and made them their slaves.

## Social Views:

The Britishers had completely changed the agrarian system of Adivasis into a feudal state. They had also

replaced the tribals by giving their land to the non tribals thereby depriving the tribals from their right to cultivate land and turning them into mere slaves. Birsa Munda along with his tribals reacted fiercely to the monstrous challenges of agrarian and cultural crisis. He wanted to save his people from the tyranny of the landlords, the British Colonial Rule and the Christian Missionaries. He considered himself as the prophet whose sole duty had been to protect the dignity and rights of the Mundas, Oraon and Kharias. He convinced his tribals that the reign of the Queen Victoria was over and the Munda Raj had begun. His slogan of indomitable spirit is remembered even today in some parts of Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. In 1896 he was sentenced two years imprisonment for allegations of massacre of tribals who didn't follow Birsa. After his release from prison he tried to establish his link with the temple in Chutia. He was a major obstacle in converting tribals into Christianity. The Chalkad village had become a pilgrimage for the poor Adivasis due to Birsa. He became a Dharti Abba. The Munda sardars were aware about the influence of Birsa over Adivasis. They were also exercising to organise people against the British Colonial Rule but they could not

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succeed in their attempt. They considered Birsa as the right person to unite Adivasis against the British. They had same object to save land and other rights of the Adivasis. It is clear from their demands that Birsa was aware about the causes of their miserable conditions. They were asking about the scrapping of the dominancy of landlords and upper castes. All types of exploitation must be stopped. They should be given equal treatment. There should not be any type of dominace by landlords over the forest, land and natural resources. The various types of taxes over the land should be eliminated and the financial exploitation must be stopped.

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## Conclusion:

The revolutionary movement and the awareness campaign which was initiated among the poor, exploited and illiterate Adivasis by Birsa Munda had a great impact on the life of tribals as well as the British Colonial Government. His contribution to the Indian national independent movement has been noteworthy. After 8 years of his martyr the British Colonial Government introduced Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT), which prohibits the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. He was the only tribal leader whose portrait hangs in the Indian Parliament Museum.

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## Nationalism and the Impact of the Christian Missionaries on the Mundas in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: The Story of Birsa Munda

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### Introduction:

The term nationalism may be defined as a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state. It is a deep sense of attachment to one's native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority which has existed in varying strength throughout history. (Kohn 9) Long before the term nationalism came into vogue, people from time immemorial have been attached to their kin, culture and tradition, to their homeland and local territorial authorities. The tribals are called the 'sons of the soil' or '*Bhumijans*' as they are attached to the land, just like the serf of medieval times. They were superstitious, polytheistic, worshippers of nature. This paper aims to highlight the fight of the tribals to secure their land rights and the different groups, especially the Christian missionaries, they encountered in the course of that struggle and the impact of Birsa Munda's Ulgulan on the people and administration.

### Socio-economic conditions and the Christian missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:

During the colonial rule, interaction with the tribal was confined to commercial activities with the later assuming the sub-ordinate role of poor tenants or share-croppers, producing crops for the markets rather than for their own subsistence. Primary education came under the purview of the local landlords who took "pride in setting up schools on their estates but were careful not to encourage too much literacy" among the subaltern. High class tenants were unwilling to serve among the remote areas and qualified tribal, if any, were not interested in promoting education at all.

Between 1850 and 1900 India was plagued by nearly twenty-four major famines resulting in the death of millions of individuals. Though the government adopted various relief measures, they proved to be ineffective. A "Famine Relief and Insurance Fund" was set up



with fifteen million rupees every year. (Majumdar et al. 861) The government spent large amounts of money for relief work and were generously supported by contributions from Christian charities, both in India and abroad. Ironically, the government never supported the missionaries in their medical missions and the lack of funds during the economic depressions caused many missions to close down. (David 95)

## **Influence of the Christian missionaries among the Tribals:**

One of the primary reasons for the tribal accepting Christianity was their extreme poverty and economic backwardness. The other reason was that the caste-conscious Hindus did not include the tribal into their society, treated them as outsiders and exploited them and their resources (David 126). The condition of the scheduled castes was better than that of the scheduled tribes as they had their traditional occupations. For the scheduled tribes, agriculture was a newly acquired occupation, which was still in its rudimentary form. The Christian missionaries promoted a policy of dependency and virtually became “...the father and mother who, in the early stages ...was expected to provide food,

clothing, jobs, education and medical care.” (Schermerhorn 189) Some missionaries were critical of this aspect as the tribal had not been taught to stand on his own feet. The Hindu sahumars or moneylenders also hesitated in advancing loans to the tribal Christians. (Jain 81) This is why perhaps the missionaries did not spread their work in the compact villages.

## **Exploitation of tribals at the hands of jagirdars:**

The Mundas and Oraons are the earliest known settlers of Chota Nagpur. Their descendants are known as the Khuntkattidars. They initially migrated to the Chotanagpur area in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD (Roy 130) and were said to have their own secular and religious head and their own system of administration called *parha*. The Mundas were a major tribe and over the years, a foster son of a Munda – Phani Mukut Roy – emerged as the hereditary ruler over the Munda-Oraon areas. The voluntary gifts of grain and seasonal jungle produce presented to the king soon became fixed tributes and he even levied a certain rent from the villages but the tribals were reluctant to oblige. The king soon adopted Hindu customs and traditions and invited other Hindus to settle in his lands. Foreign nobles and courtiers were granted village

over-lordship in return for services and a percentage of profits from the land. These newly invested *jagirdars* soon came into conflict with the *khuntkattidars* or original founders of the villages and clearers of the forest, as they tried to force the tribals to give rent in cash and kind, and their efforts were resisted. The successive kings invited outsiders of different ethnic groups to force the tribals into submission and to increase their clout in the country-side. This led to agrarian troubles as some *jagirdars*, discontent with small tributes went ahead and appropriated lands of the tribals and found new ways of exploiting them, for eg., charging enhanced rents, illegal exactions and withholding of receipts.

Though Chota Nagpur came under British control in 1765 and effective administration was started in 1834. (Ekka 396) Miscommunication enhanced the exploitation of the tribals at the hands of the *jagirdars*. As the British officials were misinformed about the affairs of the tribal lands and their original dwellers, wherever they rose in rebellion they were presented as “lawless savages and unscrupulous dacoits” by the *jagirdars* and so they were suppressed ruthlessly by the administration. (Cuthbert 363-364) The immigrant

landlords or *dikus* took advantage of the new set up to obtain ex-parte decrees to legalise their proprietary rights over the Munda and Oraon ancestral lands. In 1831-1832, the Mundas rose against the outsiders- Pathans, Muslims and Sikh. The British administration looked into the matter and in 1834 the administration was shifted to Chotanagpur plateau and a *jamindari* police and court of justice was established. In 1854, the administration came under a commissioner and regular civil, criminal and revenue courts were established. Unfortunately these courts unintentionally aided the *dikus* and helped them in destroying the rights of the *khuntkattidars*. (Reid 81-83) The “holders of land” were reduced to “holders of plough.” (Roy 219 – 226) The police soon joined hands with the *dikus* in their demand for *begari* (wageless labour). Thus exploitation of the tribals increased to great heights before the advent of the Christian missionaries. They yearned for a leader who would fight for them and take away their misery. They were ready to follow anyone and do anything that would obtain relief.

## **Birsa Munda and the Christian Missionaries:**

Mundas once again rose in armed rebellion under the leadership of Birsa

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Munda, who was considered by the Mundas as “Dharti Baba” (or land father). The rebellion under Birsa Munda in 1899-1900 came to be known as Ulgulan or Great Tumult. (Sarkar 46) Birsa’s father Sugna, his uncle Barakanu Paul and younger brother had accepted Christianity when they came in contact with the German Gossner Mission. According to the account of Bharmi Munda and the Gossner Mission, Birsa was born in July 1872, and baptised on March 7, 1886 as Birsa David, which he later changed to Daud. During his formative years, he received some education from the missionaries (47). Disillusioned by the inadequacy of Sardars to fight for their land rights, made Birsa leave the Christian mission and join the Catholic mission in 1890 hoping to achieve victory with their help, but in vain. The Christian religion greatly influenced his character and in his fight for land alienation he was forced to leave school. Soon he came under the influence of the Vaishnava sect, which also had a great impact on him. Between 1893 and 1894, he participated in a movement preventing the Forest Department from taking over village wastelands (47).

In 1895, he claimed to have seen a vision of a supreme God, after which he was endowed with miraculous healing

powers, which earned him the title of “Birsa Bhagwan”. (47) He effectively won over the Christian Mundas who saw him as a prophet of a single God. He gained many followers as he appealed to their senses as a ‘charismatic leader’. (Fuchs p. 28) Thousands flocked to hear his prophecy, while the Sardars induced agrarian and political overtones into the initially religious movement. Fearing a conspiracy, the administration jailed Birsa from 1895 to 1897 but he returned with renewed vigour. In February 1898, Birsa gave his followers two tactical options to choose from in wrestling for the Munda kingdom - either the “religious” or the “forcible” option. The latter seemed more appealing to the followers but it led to a disastrous defeat (Singh 82-83). A series of nightly meetings were held during 1898 – 1899, in which Birsa urged his followers to kill the Thikadars, Jagirdars, Rajas, Hakims and Christians and promised “the guns and bullets would turn to water” (Sarkar, 47). This announcement would have definitely increased his stature as a leader because he was asking his people to rebel against established authority. The termination of the bad present was ritually enacted at some of the large gatherings of his people on the eve of Ulgulan (Guha, 296).

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On December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1899, the followers of Birsa – Birsaites - shot arrows and tried to burn down churches in the districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum. (Sarkar 47) The police themselves soon became the main targets leading to panic in Ranchi. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900, the Birsaites were defeated at Sail Rakab Hill and Birsa was captured and imprisoned. He died on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900, in prison while nearly 350 Birsaites were put on trial, three were hanged and forty-four deported. (47) The government then ordered a definite survey of the land and settlement of the country to be made. A Jesuit missionary, J. B. Hoffmann was asked by the British to draft the The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which prohibited further alienation of the Munda ancestral lands. But by then nearly 9/10<sup>th</sup> of the Khuntkatti lands had passed on to the dikus or aliens. (Ekka p 396) However, the survey and settlement operations carried out between 1902 and 1910 and the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 did provide recognition of the Khunkatti rights and it banned beth begari. **Impact of Birsa Munda and his movement:**

Birsa Munda's movement has the trappings of a messianic movement (Fuchs p 28) for several reasons, namely: there was a clash of more than one

culture and religion as the Munda kings had adopted Hindu customs and traditions, allowed moneylenders from neighbouring kingdoms to collect rent, thereby creating an atmosphere of oppression; the coming of the missionaries brought the aboriginals with touch with another world altogether; then came the British administration; the aboriginals had been an intensely dissatisfied lot due to the exploitation of their land and resources by the dikus. Birsa vehemently rejected the authority of the dikus and termed all outsiders - dikus, British and Christian missionaries - as enemies of the people. He is looked upon by his people, as a prophet who will usher in a new era and large crowds gather to have a darshan of Birsa Bhagwan. (Chaudhari 9)

When Chotanagpur came under the British rule, the problem of land alienation and forced labour did not end, nor did the British take any interest in solving the problem. The Christian missionaries did advocate the use of legal means to fight the injustice in the Sardari Larai but had to back out when the government frowned upon their support. It was at this time that Birsa Munda came forth as a charismatic leader. There are two distinct phases in his movement: the first phase is from June 1894 – July

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1895, and, the second is from December 1899 – October 1900. In the first phases it looks like a political movement with smatterings of a religious movement. He claimed to have seen God and the people believed in his 'vision' and prediction of the coming of a 'deluge' which would destroy everything, 'would sweep away government' and obliterate all the old institutions (Singh 8) and bring a change. Biblical teachings and Munda creation myths deeply influenced this prophecy. He believed that the British Raj could only be overthrown by the use of force. (Chaudhari 19) At this point of time, it was not an organised movement, though Birsa was unwavering in his intentions.

The second phase witnessed a change from the first by the presence of an elaborate organisation. The followers were divided into three groups: Puranakas, Pracharakas, and Nanakas. (Chaudhari 9) The Puranakas or ancients were loyalists, hand-picked and closest to Birsa. They were party to the decision making processes in the 'nocturnal meetings' held in Birsa's presence. Pracharakas or preachers propagated Birsa's messages relating to religious revitalization. Nanakas, or 'new members; including recent recruits, 'were armed as well as the others but they were not party to any resolutions and

important decisions were handed down to them. His leadership was furthered boosted by the addition of the Sardari Larai leaders into his movement. The other factors affecting the movement were the famines of 1896-1897 and the famine of 1899-1900 and the outbreak of the cholera epidemic, which eventually took his life. The tribals believed that natural disasters were ominous and Birsa's predictions seemed to be coming true. They hoped to recover their 'lost kingdom' and a time when there would be 'enough to eat, no famine, the people will live together in love'. (Singh 193) Religion provided them with courage and hope for a better future and vigour to fight against the oppression by alien rulers. (Arnold 1982)

Though he had witnessed other forms of resistance during his formative years, starting with the Sardari Larai, followed by the search for justice by constitutional means, for Birsa too, the use of force was the only way, to rid his people and his land, from the hands of the exploiters. The Ulgulan gave the British the opportunity to further their administration in the region and the people of the area were encouraged to acquire education and obtain jobs. Though Birsa's nationalist vision may have been limited to the defence of his

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tribal homeland against the intruders, nevertheless it was his attachment to his soil that made him fight for his homeland. The Ulgulan was not only anti-colonial, it was anti-national too, as the Mundas had rebelled against the dikus, the moneylenders, the rajas, and finally even the missionaries too. To this extent the Christian missionaries were successful in making the tribals development – oriented and aware of their rights and supported them in their struggle. By providing education through

their various schools, the missionaries inadvertently sowed the seed of nationalism in the hearts of the tribal people. (David 120). Thus, the tribals were thus successful in winning some degree of legal protection for their land rights and Birsa Munda now remains as a living memory, not only as an apostle of a small religious sect and through the folk songs but as the prophet of the Jharkhand movement and a hero of the extreme left.

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## Impact of Birsa Munda on Indian Tribal Community- An Analysis

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### **Historical background:**

In 1895, a man named Birsa was seen roaming the forests and villages of Chottanagpur in Bihar. People said he had miraculous powers – he could cure all diseases and multiply grain. Birsa himself declared that God had appointed him to save his people from trouble, free them from the slavery of dikus (outsiders). Soon thousands began following Birsa, believing that he was bhagwan (God) and had come to solve all their problems. Birsa was born in a family of Mundas – a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur. But his followers included other tribals of the region – Santhals and Oraons. All of them in different ways were unhappy with the changes they were experiencing and the problems they were facing under British rule. Their familiar ways of life seemed to be disappearing, their livelihoods were under threat, and their religion appeared to be in danger. What problems did Birsa set out to resolve? Who were the outsiders being referred to as dikus, and how did they enslave the people of the

region? What was happening to the tribal people under the British? How did their lives change? These are some of the questions you will read about in this chapter. You have read about tribal societies last year. Most tribes had customs and rituals that were very different from those laid down by Brahmans. These societies also did not have the sharp social divisions that were characteristic of caste societies. All those who belonged to the same tribe thought of themselves as sharing common ties of kinship. However, this did not mean that there were no social and economic differences within tribes.

### **Birsa Munda:**

Birsa was born in the mid-1870s. The son of a poor father, he grew up around the forests of Bohonda, grazing sheep, playing the flute, and dancing in the local akhara. Forced by poverty, his father had to move from place to place looking for work. Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal leader who had a huge role to play in the Indian freedom struggle. He was a much celebrated folk hero



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belonging to the Munda tribe (of present day Jharkhand). He is responsible for spearheading a tribal movement in the late 19th century during the British raj, this made him an iconic figure of the Indian freedom movement. The revolt that Munda spearheaded mainly concentrated in the Munda belt of Tamar, Khunti, Sarwada and Bongaon. He is best known as a folk hero who gave the British sleepless nights. He truly was a tribal revolutionary who managed to even scare off the British colonialists. He was a tribal leader belonging to the Chota Nagpur plateau of Jharkhand. He was a truly fearless and committed leader. He died at the age of 25 in the custody of the British authorities in the Central Jail of Ranchi. As a child Munda went to a missionary school for a brief period of time before he finally quit.

It was on the advice of his teacher that Birsa converted to Christianity. Conversion alone would allow him entry into the German Mission School, an idea that was to profoundly impact him later in life. Munda began to get more and more aware about the missionary zeal of converting the tribal population of India into Christianity and to protest against this forceful conversion Munda started the faith of 'Birsait.'

Many members of the Munda and the Oraon tribal communities began joining the Birsait faith and it posed a major challenge to the British mission for conversion of tribals into Christianity. Some of the most important and significant years, that casted a deep impression on Munda's vision, were spent in the Chaibasa town of modern day Jharkhand. He was close to the heart of the Sardars agitation, the lesson that young Birsa Munda learnt from his engagement there was that the British wanted to overrun the local tribal communities through a combination of government sponsored exploitation and missionary work.

As a result of this realisation, in 1890 Birsa Munda quit the German Mission School, ceased being a Christian and returned back to his original tribal faith. After he left Chaibasa in 1890, Birsa Munda fully dedicated himself to the struggle against British colonialism. What Munda also noticed was the fact that the colonialists were successfully destroying the tribal way of life especially of the Santhal and the Munda communities by introducing structures for rent payment for the land and began taxing the produce.

## Impact of Birsa Munda:

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Ironically, most local zamindars agreed to become party to the exploitation of the local tribes and this further contributed to their exploitation. Most landless tribals became helpless bonded labourers. Birsa Munda responded to the gross exploitation of his people, Birsa and his followers started the “Ulgulam” (The Great Tumult) or the great rebellion against the British colonialists. The movement’s main aim was to reassert the rights of the tribal community as the real owners of the soil and the expulsion of both the British colonialists as well as the selfish zamindars. The movement was marked by a series of guerrilla attacks on the British, killing many of the British police officers. Birsa Munda asserted that forest produce duly belonged to the Adivasis and that is why in 1894, Birsa mobilised his people for a remission of forest dues that the local zamindars collected. This mobilisation brought together other tribes such as the Oraon, the Munda and Kharias on a single platform. Munda encouraged all those taking part in the rebellion to boycott and not cooperate with either the British or the zamindars in any manner. He was imprisoned for two years at the Hazaribagh Central Jail for the mobilisations that he created.

Post his release. Munda committed himself even more to the cause of Indian freedom. It was in August 1897 that Munda organised 400 of his men, all armed with bows and arrows and they together attacked the Khunti police station. In 1898, the Mundas faced a British force that they first defeated. Later the British imprisoned many men and women of the Munda tribe. Birsa Munda did not just limit his struggle to the British but also sought to fight the dark cloud of ignorance amongst his own community. He worked extensively to free the Munda community from religious superstition, alcoholism and animal sacrifice. He asserted the importance of knowing and feeling proud of one’s own roots, while simultaneously trying to fight internal darkness. He tried to inspire his followers to understand the importance of owning one’s land and asserting a voice for their own dignity. The mighty British empire could not afford to turn a blind eye to Munda and responded to his rebellion by increasing the extent and degree of its exploitative and unjust practices. Birsa Munda was imprisoned in 1900 and experienced extensive brutal torture, Birsa passed away on June 9, 1900. British authorities claimed that he died of Cholera but the truth is that he

succumbed to his injuries. It was as a result of Birsa Munda's relentless fight that the British were compelled to pass the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, which restricted the sale of land belonging to the Adivasis to non-Adivasi clients.

It is impossible for us to put into words or even imagine the magnanimity of the contributions made by Birsa Munda. The state of Jharkhand was born on his birthday, November 15. It is ironic that even after independence and decades after his death, the plight of the tribal community in India is replete with stories of exploitation and anguish, pain and injustice. Birsa Munda was an example of immense courage and visionary zeal, his determination to fight against the British to restore the dignity of the tribal people continues to remind us of the failure of the post-independent Indian nation-state.

## **Forest laws and their impact:**

The life of tribal groups, as you have seen, was directly connected to the forest. So changes in forest laws had a considerable effect on tribal lives. The British extended their control over all forests and declared that forests were state property. Some forests were classified as Reserved Forests for they produced timber which the British wanted. In these forests people were not

allowed to move freely, practise jhum cultivation, collect fruits, or hunt animals. How were jhum cultivators to survive in such a situation? Many were therefore forced to move to other areas in search of work and livelihood. But once the British stopped the tribal people from living inside forests, they faced a problem. From where would the Forest Department get its labour to cut trees for railway sleepers and to transport logs?

Colonial officials came up with a solution. They decided that they would give jhum cultivators small patches of land in the forests and allow them to cultivate these on the condition that those who lived in the villages would have to provide labour to the Forest Department and look after the forests. So in many regions the Forest Department established forest villages to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour many tribal groups reacted against the colonial forest laws. They disobeyed the new rules, continued with practices that were declared illegal, and at times rose in open rebellion. Such was the revolt of Songram Sangma in 1906 in Assam, and the forest Satyagraha of the 1930s in the Central Provinces.

## **The problem with trade:**

During the nineteenth century, tribal groups found that traders and

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moneylenders were coming into the forests more often, wanting to buy forest produce, offering cash loans, and asking them to work for wages. It took tribal groups some time to understand the consequences of what was happening. Let us consider the case of the silk growers. In the eighteenth century, Indian silk was in demand in European markets.

The fine quality of Indian silk was highly valued and exports from India increased rapidly. As the market expanded, East India Company officials tried to encourage silk production to meet the growing demand. Hazaribagh, in present-day Jharkhand, was an area where the Santhals reared cocoons. The traders dealing in silk sent in their agents who gave loans to the tribal people and collected the cocoons. The growers were paid Rs 3 to Rs 4 for a thousand cocoons. These were then exported to Burdwan or Gaya where they were sold at five times the price. The middlemen – so called because they arranged deals between the exporters and silk growers – made huge profits. The silk growers earned very little. Understandably, many tribal

groups saw the market and the traders as their main enemies.

## **The search for work:**

The plight of the tribals who had to go far away from their homes in search of work was even worse. From the late nineteenth century, tea plantations started coming up and mining became an important industry. Tribals were recruited in large numbers to work the tea plantations of Assam and the coal mines of Jharkhand. They were recruited through contractors who paid them miserably low wages, and prevented them from returning home.

## **Conclusion:**

The political aimed of the Birsa movement was to drive away missionaries, moneylenders, traders, Hindu landlords and the government. The main impact it forced the colonial government to introduce laws so that the land of the tribals could not be easily taken away by the dikus. Second it showed once again that the tribal people had the capacity to protest against injustice and express their anger against colonial rule. They did this in their own way, inventing their own rituals and symbols of struggle.

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# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## Legendary Birsa Munda

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### Introduction:

Every rebellion gives birth to a revolution, and it creates history and teaches a lesson to the oppressor. The freedom movement of India gives birth to many revolutionaries who fought against British raj and their system to get freedom. One such revolution takes place in Jharkhand. As Mahashwetha Devi writes in preface to her novel rights of the forest about the legendary of Birsa munda as: “Birsa Munda’s rebellion and revolution is not only against on the colonialism and their exploitation but also on the Dikus and missionaries who oppressed tribal people”. The tribals of chotanagpur have long history of resistance and revolt against the British administration and non tribals like Zamindars, thikadars, and Jagirdars. The rebellion of tribals starts when the British raj and dikus started to impose strict rules on the tribals socially, economically, politically. The introduction of landlord system is the beginning of tribal conflict and struggle in the tribal regions. The tribals revolt against the social and administrative system of foreign rulers and the rebellion and revolution took

place when the Dikus started to encroach the tribals land, forest and economic resources under their control. At this time Birsa Munda takes the initiative to rebel against the atrocities of British raj and Dikus. He started Munda movement and fights for his people’s rights and became Bhagvan of the downtrodden.

### Birsa’s Ulgulan:

When Christian missionaries fails to keep the promise that is the economic liberation from zamindars and colonial authorities who imposed heavy tax on farmers, Due to the drought hit on the plateau of Chotanagpur, the people living in that region faces economic problems. The Munda rebellion starts mainly because of the desire for economic liberation from the zamindars and British rule. Birsa Munda led the movement against the dikus and British rule. Birsa witnessed the strength of sardari movement which worked to restore the adivasis rights through petitions and disposition to authorities. Emerging tribal issues made impact on Birsa’s mind to fight for them. He takes the initiative to fight for Adivasis and their freedom from colonial authorities, thekedars and

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zamindars crushed the life of Advasis for their benefits. They treated Adivasis as savages, animals and criticises their traditions and customs it raises the anger in Birsa and he takes the leadership methods for Adivasis cause.

## **Stages of Birsas Ulgulan:**

During the 1890s Birsa started to speak with his people about the injustice and exploitation done by British. His movement was initially agrarian in 1895, due to encroachment of Munda land by the immigrant landlords and also allurements of Munda labourers to the tea estates of Assam and Bengal, Birsa started preaching against the outsiders and displayed unique mix of secular and religious motivation. The first uprising of 1895 was not very militant, but the second one in 1899-1900 took the region by storm. The movement was basically agrarian and defensive and through this, Birsa sought to redress the problems faced by the people of the region. Birsa opposed both, the missionaries and the government and promised the establishment of an independent 'Munda Raj' in which there would be no oppressive officials, "diku" or the missionaries. The millenarian character is significant of the Munda Rebellion. Birsa clearly was a great freedom fighter who

fought to drive away the British, the missionaries and the zamindars.

Birsa also started his own religion and proclaimed he was god's messenger. Many Mundas, Kharias and Oraons accepted him as their leader. Many other Hindus and Muslims also flocked to see the new leader of the masses. Birsa advocated the tribal people to shun the missionaries and revert to their traditional ways. He also asked people not to pay taxes. He was arrested in 1895 and released after two years.

In 1899, he resumed his armed struggle along with the people. He razed police stations, government property, churches and houses of Zamindars. The British caught him in 1900 from Jamkopai forest, Chakradharpur. Birsa Munda died on June 9<sup>th</sup> 1900 while lodged at the Ranchi jail aged just 25. Authorities claimed he died of cholera although this is doubted.

## **Conclusion:**

Situations, environment, necessities, makes a man to take the leadership to lead the people who are not able to find the right path, Birsa was one among the leaders who for the people's sake became a messenger of god to give justice to the innocent people. Birsa Munda's legacy is still alive and tribal peoples of Karnataka and Jharkhand

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celebrate his birth anniversary on November 15. Many institutions and organizations are named after him. Mahasweta Devi wrote a novel 'Aranyer Adhikar' on the life of Birsa Munda and his rebellion against British Raj. The novel won her the Sahitya Akademi Award for Bengali in 1979. His portrait hangs in the Indian parliament museum. He is the only tribal to have been so

honored. On the occasion of unveiling of the statue of Birsa Munda the president R.K. Narayan on 28 august 1998 says, "Birsa is national recognition of the role of tribals in the freedom struggle and of the importance of preserving their identity and their rich traditional culture while improving their living conditions and integrating them emotionally into the mainstream of national life."

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## Atrocities against Tribals and Birsa Munda's Ulgulan

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### **Introduction:**

The colonial India, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, witnessed a massive upsurge in resistance movements led by the indigenous people (Adivasi) in the eastern part of the country. These movements led by the young tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda, happened against the backdrop of a history of exploitation and land alienation. With the advent of British administration, the existing system of feudal landlordism, which was generative of apathy for the 'aboriginal inhabitants' in the area was further entrenched by the legal-political edifice established by the empire. These laws brought about massive changes to the existing system of land governance. The new laws came after an imperial legal framework that worked on individual ownership and rights. The changes laid down in law, impacted the traditional system that had survived through collective ownership and oral history. These changes disrupted the harmony that had been sustained for generations. The systematic violence against the adivasis witnessed by the

Munda adivasi and Birsa Munda mobilized the tribal community and rose against the British, missionaries and the zamindars (landlords).

### **Attack on tribal culture:**

The British agrarian policies caused a huge disruption which made a drastic impact on the livelihood of these tribal people; disrupting their usual way of life which was hitherto peaceful and in tune with nature. Not only British economic and political policies but also aggressive religious and cultural policies of the Christian missionaries which belittled the tribal people and their culture acted as fuel for their fight against the British. The Munda Tribe had followed the Khunkhatti system of joint landholding, while the British replaced this with the zamindari system, through which the entry for the outsiders to the tribal areas was permitted and it aided to the exploitation of the native tribals. The Munda adivasis, who were the landowners, were soon reduced to forced laborers. It resulted soon into more impoverishment and deprivation of the tribals.

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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As a reaction to the introduction of the zamindari system or the permanent settlement of the outsiders in tribal areas, Birsa Munda in 1894 declared 'Ulgulan' or revolt against the British and the Dikus- the outsiders. He awakened and collected the masses against the British atrocities. He travelled to every village to raise the consciousness of the people declaring an end to Victorian rule and proclaimed the beginning of Munda rule. Due to awakening of an effective movement, people stopped paying debts to moneylenders and taxes to the British. The British forces put all their might to suppress the revolt and attacked heavily on Munda guerrillas.

For Indians, freedom from the Britishers was an eminently desirable outcome, but what about freedom from social and economic exploitation. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the prominent personality who raised voice against this exploitation and fought for the betterment of the downtrodden people of India. Long before the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh on the scene and their presence in the freedom struggle, there was Birsa Munda, a tribal revolutionary who frightened the British colonialists.

The land-hungry non-tribal peasants and keen-eyed traders and

merchants began to disintegrate the tribal regions. This intrusion of the non-tribal people into the tribal regions was accelerated by the establishment and consolidation of the British administration. It led the tribals towards the series of uprisings to throw out the intruders from their homeland. This was the period where a new class of middle men between administration and the people and between chiefs and their people came into existence. These were recognised as traders, merchants, moneylenders and thikadars. The new comers were called as Dikus, the outsiders; the creatures of colonial system.

The breakdown of the Mundari agrarian shook the old society to its roots. For the first time in the history of the tribe brutal elements thrived and multiplied. Due to which the peace and homogeneity of the village was gone, the old way of life was replaced by a new order. The value system, the ties of the village tribal family loosened. The Munda institutions of the Parha and panchayat decayed and the Dikus replaced the leaders of the old village hierarchy. The century's long system of beliefs, traditions and customs, the way of livelihood, the bond of togetherness was vanished. The tribals were evicted

by brutal forces and the newcomers took possession of the tribal bhumihari lands. The worst casualty happened to the moral sense of the tribes, their truthfulness, honesty and simplicity. A few of the Mundas in sheer confusion adopted the same means of deception and venality as those employed by the aliens to destroy their agrarian system.

## **The Rise of Birsa:**

Even though Birsa lived for just 25 years, he is one legend who has made a long-standing impact on India's fight against the British. Birsa Munda spearheaded an Indian tribal mass movement that arose in the tribal belt of modern Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the British Raj. He inspired various tribes who accepted him as their leader. He understood the nature of exploitation by the British against the native tribals. Birsa Munda became the tribal folk hero who gave the British sleepless nights. The movement of the adivasis was for their right for the soil because they were the real owners of the soil. Responding to the gross exploitation of his people, Birsa and his band of loyal followers began 'Ulgulan' against the British and the zamindars. They used the method of guerrilla style attacks on the British. It was in October

1894, when Birsa mobilized a protest march for remission of forest dues that the local zamindars collected. Birsa was imprisoned for two years for his actions.

Birsa Munda is known as 'Dharti Aba'; the earth father, he stressed on the need of the tribals to study their own religion and not forget their cultural roots. Though he lived a short span of life, Birsa Munda is known to have mobilized the tribal community against the British. The aim and scope of the movement were driven by the discontent of adivasis, who experienced historical injustices encompassing a wide range of exploitation manifesting in the form of land alienation as a result of English laws. The Birsa Ulgulan cannot be studied as a singular and isolated moment in the history of colonial India, but rather more powerfully as a metaphor and symbol of resistance that offers an alternative political vision.

Though Birsa was a Christian convert born into a poor adivasi family in 1875, later on he renounced Christianity and the missionary school because it belittled the Munda culture. Birsa also appropriated saintly qualities and eulogized practices directed towards moral disciplining including the ban on alcohol consumption. His political visions were shaped by his vast

experience of the colonizers' practices, including acts of belittling the Munda culture in missionary schools, or the legal alienation of adivasis through Eurocentric notions of property legislation. He began to ingrain political consciousness among his followers; he had to face jail more frequently due to his activism. He finally gave a clarion call for the Ulgulan towards the end of 1897 and revolted fearlessly against the empire. His Ulgulan became an antecedent for the political grammar of struggles both within the communities and later for political parties. Birsa Ulgulan should be studied with vigor as a metaphor and symbol of resistance that offers an alternative political vision.

India belongs to the tribals. Tribals never welcomed invaders nor accepted slavery. Due to the cruelty exploitation of the tribal, their natural wealth and social culture are being vanished. The study of Birsa Munda's rebel portrays a unique tribal movement

which the British Government faced in the closing year of the last century. The impact of the dominant culture of the day and of the alien government in alliance with zamindars, zagirdars and thikadars on the Mundas created such a stir which burst forth into a rebellion.

## Conclusion:

Birsa Munda has emerged today as a powerful cult figure symbolizing the struggle of the large mass of tribal people for the preservation of their identity, for equality and for radical socio-economic transformation. His personality and the intensity of the Munda movement made a profound impact on the course of history. Birsa also became the symbol of the freedom struggle in Chhotanagpur and in all over the country. Birsa cult developed further as various political currents tried to establish their link with the Munda leader and his movement. Birsa's movement has now become part of the popular struggle for a more human and humane order.

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## Reflection of Ulgulan

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Among all the freedom fighters who had sacrificed their lives for nation and fought against British rule in India, one such pioneering freedom fighter was Birsa Munda. He was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero who belonged to the Munda tribe. He not only fought the British, but also championed the rights of tribal rights. Born on November 15, 1875, Birsa spent much of his childhood moving from one village to another with his parents. He received his early education at Salga under the guidance of his teacher Jaipal Nag. On the recommendation of Jaipal Nag, Birsa converted to Christianity in order to join the German Mission School. He, however, opted out of the school after a few years. He could live a short span of life. He died in Ranchi jail on June 9, 1900 at a young age of 25. Though he lived a short span of life, Birsa Munda is known to have mobilised the tribal community against the British and had also forced the colonial officials to introduce laws protecting the land rights of the tribals. Birsa's achievement as a young tribal revolutionary has

continued to be celebrated over decades now and he has successfully carved out a space for himself in popular and folk literature, academia and mass media.

Birsa Munda was a freedom fighter, a religious leader, and a folk hero. Born on a Thursday he was named after that day according to the then prevalent Munda custom. He fought for the rights of the tribal community. Munda set out to abolish the feudal system that the British had introduced in the Adivasi forest land. He fought for the rights of his people, his land, and their rights on their land. 'Dharti Abba' or the Father of the earth was the Nickname of Birsa Munda. He is the God for the tribal communities like the Mundas, Oraons, and Kharias. He went on to create a new religion called Birsait, which worshipped only one God.

The impact of Christianity was felt in the way he came to relate to religion later. Having gained awareness of the British colonial ruler and the efforts of the missionaries to convert tribes to Christianity, Birsa started the faith of 'Birsait'. Soon members of the

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Munda and Oraon community started joining the Birsait sect and it turned into a challenge to British conversion activities. Birsa Munda is one legend who has made a long standing impact on India's fight against the British. He spearheaded an Indian tribal mass movement that arose in the tribal belt of modern Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the British Raj. Munda is one of the most important faces of Indian tribal movements against the British, who inspired various tribes not only Mundas but also Kharias and Oraons, who accepted him as their leader.

During the late 1880s, Munda began to understand the nature of exploitation meted out by the British against the native tribes. The huge disruption caused by British agrarian policies made an impact on the livelihood of these tribal people, disrupting their usual way of life which was hitherto peaceful and in tune with nature. Not only British economic and political policies of the Christian missionaries which belittled the tribal people and their culture acted as fuel for their fight against the British.

During the period 1886 to 1890, Birsa Munda spent a long period of time

in Chaibasa which was close to the center of the Sardars agitation. The Mundas, who were once the landowners, were soon reduced to forced labourers. As a reaction to the introduction of the Zamindari system or permanent settlement in tribal areas, Birsa Munda in 1894 declared "Ulgulan" or revolt against the British and the Dikus - the outsiders. He was soon known as Birsa Bhagban in these areas and a huge number of tribals began to follow Munda. In 1894, Birsa also started his own religion and proclaimed he was God's messenger. With the advent of a new religious order, Munda began awaking masses against the British atrocities. Not only the tribals but also many other Hindus and Muslims also flocked to see the new leader of the masses. When Munda decided to start his own religion, the Britishers and Christian missionaries became terrible. The Christian missionaries were unnerved as Birsa was becoming the stumbling block in the path of conversion. Birsa was arrested in 1895 and released after two years. After his release in 1897, Munda picked up the movement by reorganising the tribals. Munda went underground and sowed the seeds of revolt against British and landlords.

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On December 24, 1899, Munda launched an attack on police stations and churches, killing few policemen. The energised tribes had spread to almost the entire Chotanagpur region. Birsa called for a decisive war against the British. The British forces put all their might to suppress the revolt and killed hundreds of people. Birsa had to escape to the hills of Singhbhum. On February 3, 1900, Birsa Munda was finally caught by the British from Jamkopai forest, Chakradharpur. Birsa Munda died on June 9, 1900 at the Ranchi jail aged just 25. Authorities claimed he died of cholera although this is doubted. For Indians the phrase 'freedom struggle' refers to their long struggle for Independence against British colonial rule. This was a movement which brought together Indians of many hues on one common platform. A few decades before Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh made their presence felt in the freedom struggle, there was Birsa Munda, a tribal revolutionary who frightened the British colonialists. Birsa Munda remains relevant for indigenous identity around the world. He was an indigenous leader and a folk hero, belonging to the Munda tribe who was behind the Millenarian movement that arose in Jharkhand during the British Raj.

This made him an important figure in the history of the Indian independence movement. Birsa Munda is named with great respect as one of the freedom fighters in the Indian struggle for independence against British colonialism. Birsa's devotion to his people was such that he was almost revered as God by his followers.

Some of the objectives of Birsa Munda's "Ulgulan" revolt were realised later after his death as the Britishers enacted Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908. The landmark act was an important piece of legislation for the tribal population of Jharkhand as it restricted the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. The British government also recognised "Khuntkatti" rights of the tribals and also banned 'Beth begari' or forced labour. Birsa Munda is remembered by the masses as one of the greatest tribal icons of the country. The history of tribal communities in India post independence is replete with stories of exploitation and denial of access to basic amenities. Birsa Munda was an exceptional freedom fighter who took on the British. However, he entered this protracted battle so that the Mundas and other Adivasi communities could reclaim ownership of not just their resources but their way of life.

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## Birsa Munda and His Political Legacy

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### **Introduction:**

Birsa Munda, Adivasi leader (Indigenous people) led a rebellion at the end of the 19th century against the dikus (outsiders) popularly known as Birsa Ulgulan (tumult, rebellion). Despite the fact that the part of Birsa Munda has been original in advocating the Adivasi cause, his political developments and heritage have been twisted, as other noticeable Indian chronicled figures, including B R Ambedkar and M K Gandhi. Regardless of distortions, Birsa Munda and his governmental issues keep on motivating Adivasis as well as Dalits and other underestimated segments in their quest for achieving social equity. This article highlights on Birsa Munda and his political legacy.

### **From Obscurity to Fame:**

The early distributions on Birsa Munda have invigorated researchers to complete an itemized work around his life and political development. The life and political developments of Adivasi political dissidents have been commonly

disregarded by scholastics and essayists. For example, Chakra Bisoyi of Kondh revolt (1850), Sidhu and Kanhu of the Santhal revolt (1855–56), Thammandora of Rampa disobedience (1879–80), Bantu Parja and Syamnath Dhakad of Bastar resistance or Bhumkal, Jatra Uraon of Tana Bhagat development (1914–21), Rani Guidinliu of Naga revolt (1932) have been dismissed by scholastics.

In the tremendous corpus of works on India's opportunity battle, including voluminous Towards Freedom (1937–47) distributions by the Indian Council of Historical Research, antiquarians infrequently minded to manage the topic of Adivasi political dissidents. In spite of such a situation, Birsa has risen as a special among the parcel of Adivasi political dissidents. After the autonomy, the Government of Bihar distributed a book named the History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar (1957) and remembered a section for Birsa by antiquarian Kalikinkar Datta, who had prior distributed a book on Santhal resistance (1940). The part is, maybe, the

principal scholarly composition on Birsa Munda. Despite the fact that Datta bound Birsa to 10 pages in a huge book of 640 pages, in any case, it fed research enthusiasm regarding the matter. At that point, Bihar Tribal Research Institute embraced a venture on the life of Birsa prompting the distribution of *Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan* by S P Sinha (1964). Simultaneously, a youthful government employee, K Suresh Singh distributed his account in 1966. From that point forward enthusiasm around his life and social developments have developed broadly. It is no distortion except for Birsa is presently a very much examined subject in sociology diaries and other fora.

The academic direction on Birsa has been essential. At first, researchers like Datta and Sinha endeavored to dovetail Birsa's function to the standard patriot arousing. The thought was to top off the hole regarding support of Adivasis in the opportunity battle, which had been disregarded hitherto. From reference section treatment, the subject has formed into a considerable point to loan substance to driving speculations on the planet historiography. Notable researchers Michael Adas (1979) and Ranajit Guha (1999) have referred to Birsa Munda to fabricate the hypothesis

of millenarianism and inferior school individually. The developing significance for Birsa Munda in academic work has likewise given subject material to well known writing and film. It has propelled the distribution of well known books by the National Book Trust and the distributions division of the association government. In 1977, Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel *Aranyer Adhikar* (in Bengali, and it was later converted into Hindi as *Jangal Ke Davedar*), fixated on the life of Birsa Munda, was created by recognized essayist Mahasweta Devi. The epic depends on the verifiable record brought to the front by Suresh Singh. Movie producers have not failed behind either. A couple of good narratives have given true to life articulation to Birsa's life and social developments. Some remarkable narratives are: 'Birsa Munda' by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2016), 'Birsa Munda: The Real Hero' by Doordarshan (2018) and 'Birsa Munda' by Prasar Bharati Archives (2019).

## **Oddity of Popularity:**

As the collection of scholarly, abstract, and masterful works underscored his job, the country perceived Birsa Munda as an unmistakable political dissident. As an uncommon badge of honor, Birsa has been supplied with two commemorations

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in Parliament: a 14-foot sculpture in the Parliament perplexing and a representation inside the Parliament building. Another eminent recognition for Birsa has been the decision of 15 November 2000 by the Government of India matching with his introduction to the world commemoration as the delegated day for the arrangement of the territory of Jharkhand. The thought has been to maintain the soul of Birsa to ensure Adivasis, in whose intrigue the new state appeared, and to pass on the administration's purpose of proceeding with the equivalent. Other than these, dedicatory landmarks have been raised at Birsa's origin, Ulihatu town. A lot more landmarks of Birsa and different methods of celebrating him have since followed. Plans are forthcoming by the Government of Jharkhand to introduce his huge sculpture at the old Birsa Munda Jail in Ranchi where he kicked the bucket.

Birsa Munda is half-comprehended, and on occasion, even misconstrued. A Yale University study ventures Birsa as a simple blackmailer in the clothing of battling for agrarian rights for Adivasi laborers, and neither an enemy of colonialist nor a patriot (Chandra 2016). A London University study echoes the equivalent to see Birsa's revolt “not [as]

an enemy of provincial defiance of the ancestral political dissidents as such.” (Shah 2014) Another arrangement of compositions, particularly by Christian evangelists and their kind portray Birsa as a juvenile "aficionado" and an adventurer with drifting thoughts; his initiative is said to epitomize "overstated and misshaped articulation" of Adivasi mindfulness (Anonymous 1911: 545; O'Connor 1901). Ultimately, Birsa has been depicted as a partisan—supportive of Hindu and hostile to Christian—rather than driving different Adivasi masses. That Birsa formulated his own religion to be utilized as an activating power without subverting the faithfulness of his supporters from different beliefs has likewise been overlooked (Tiru 1949; Hoffman and Emelen 2015: 570).

The analysis against Birsa from colonialists and ministers is reasonable. Birsa, all things considered, suddenly rose as a wild foe on their way. Indeed, even his depiction as Hindu is possible. The mid-twentieth century mainstream patriotism clearly saw Adivasis as "in reverse Hindus" (Ghurye 1943). Oddly, the misinterpretation on Birsa has even forayed into advance scholarly information since. This is on the grounds that current grant does not have the fearlessness to liberate itself from the

romanticisation of Adivasi as "crude" continually tending to fall back on the foreordained ways of savagery or millenarianism when put in an emergency, best portrayed by Birsa's uprising. This disorder restrains researchers to recognize a working tough mind behind Adivasis' political activities (Bara 2009). To peruse such mind, researchers need to enjoy the "re-perusing [of] the frontier document" than all the while putting forth an attempt to investigate elective sources (Chandra 2016: 2).

The desolation of grant to liberate itself from assumptions lets old thoughts on Birsa to get story. In the ongoing years, especially since the arrangement of the territory of Jharkhand in 2000, as the political utilization of Birsa's name has flourished, it has gotten sufficiently clear.

A portion of the previously mentioned esteem for and analysis against Birsa have been conjured for hardliner political closures. For instance, the dismissing of Birsa's endeavors for the Adivasi cause, the applauding of the "productive" part of Christians followers and individual preachers, and the establishment of Birsa's main adversary Jesuit J B Hoffman's sculpture in the locale by the congregation have been

named as "affront" to Birsa (Dey 2019). Birsa's character has been discolored in a conspicuous way. Chronicled realities about his life and thoughts have been misshaped freely. These improvements spoil the picture of Birsa Munda as an Adivasi mass pioneer. This situation destroys the spirit of Birsa.

## **Outlining the foes:**

Despite the fact that upheld by the Sardari Larai development, Birsa rose in his own right. He infused new radicalism into existing disturbances in three different ways:

To begin with, Birsa was out and out in pronouncing all outsiders—colonialists, Christian teachers, landowners, and different exploiters—as dikus (Adivasis' foes). This was a striking take off from Sardari Larai pioneers who tended towards demonstrating faithfulness, straightforwardly at the outset, to the lord of Chhotanagpur, the image of landlordism, and were hesitant to remove themselves from European specialists and teachers.

Second, while Sardari Larai had faith in the established technique for unsettling for quite a long time, notwithstanding irresolute government reactions and authorities' stony lack of concern to the Adivasi cause, Birsa

requested his adherents to arm themselves for a coordinated obstruction.

Third, in the spot of Sardari Larai's ambiguous thought about "Munda Raj," Birsa propounded the possibility of a "Munda disum," a call to pick up opportunity from all diku components, and the British frontier rule was seen as the mother of every one of them, and must be discarded totally. In light of these firm thoughts, Birsa recognized companions and enemies of Adivasis. The adversaries were named, in nearby articulation, as "Rajas, Hakims, Zamindars, Christians and Samsars (non-Christians)," whom Birsa requested that his adherents assault. (Anonymous 1911: 549)

Zamindars, the conventional exploiters, were among the most detested enemies. The Raja (ruler) of Chhotanagpur was viewed as a usurper of the authority from manki Munda (a head of a gathering of towns). Accepting that the engraving of Raja's position was kept in his official hallowed place, Chutia Temple, the principal activity of Birsa upon his delivery from prison in 1997 was to lead a 12 PM assault on the altar. Birsa additionally assaulted British rulers, the key adversary and the benefactor of zamindars and different dikus. Christian teachers were considered

close by the pilgrim rulers with the trademark of "topi ek topi," which means cap wearing white men, regardless of whether authorities or preachers, are of asimilar variety (Hoffmann and Emelen 2015: 567). Birsa felt that, in spite of individual vicinity with the authorities, evangelists never strived for Adivasi equity rather they educated the specialists about Birsa's exercises from towns (Hoffmann 1900). Accordingly, evangelist and government foundations were assaulted together.

## **Uncovering a new era:**

Against the complex firearms of the British armed force, customary weapons of Adivasi rebels were no match. Yet, Birsa's soul and technique for arranging the Ulgulan passed on to the British specialists the message from Adivasis and its significance. After Birsa's underlying assaults, the British started a perpetual measure by the Commutation Act of 1997 to stop the medieval act of Bethbegari (constrained work). This finished, following Birsa's second period of attack (1899), in the review and settlement of Chhotanagpur, and the declaration of Chota Nagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act, 1908, evidently a Magna Carta for the assurance of Adivasis (Fraser 1908).

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# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## Birsa Munda and Nationalism in Colonial Bihar

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### Introduction:

Birsa Munda (1875-1900) was a youth icon who attracted many people and revolutionaries to take up the cause of mother land and sacrifice for the country. At a very young age, he understood the various policies and programmes of the colonial government which was hampering the life of poor tribal people. The colonial rules and regulations were not only destroying the lives but also their livelihood. He also understood the socio-cultural fabrics of colonial government its overall impact on the people of India. His revolution was multi-dimensional and revolved round complete independence of tribal and traditional rights over land and its people. He was very much vocal about the rights of the people and to defend and save it from outsiders at any cost. He not only awakened the tribal people about their rights but also how to defend, control and mobilize through various training and programmes. He took up the issues of inhabitants like the suppression of tribals

by the outsiders (non-tribals) called as “dikhus” and other intermediaries people like thikadars, moneylanders and zamindars. Stephen Fuchs “described more than fifty tribal movements which had certain “messianic” and “millenarian” overtones. All had divine or prophetic leaders who were believed to possess supernatural powers and looked forward to a terrestrial state of righteousness and justice that would correspond to the widely accepted myth of the golden age”<sup>1</sup>.

The uprisings and movements of the tribals had been categorized by scholars into various categories but its national character was not felt by them. In the colonial Bihar, the Britishers had to fight many battles especially with the tribals which was detrimental and challenged the authority of the colonial government. In the “19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography and anthropology, it was described as covered with ‘primeval forests’ and peopled with ‘ungovernable tribes”<sup>1</sup>. The region as defined and



understood by the colonial masters gives an impression of a very backward and primitive culture and traditions. The tribal leaders like Tilka Manjhi, Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav had already challenged the colonial government before Birsa Munda. The whole legacy of tribal resistance and revolt was in the background of Birsa Munda. He emulated all of them at an early age and became the sinecure of his people and the colonial government in colonial Bihar. In this paper my endeavor is to highlight the following:

1. To understand the Birsa Munda led movement in the background of colonial Bihar.
2. To assess the reasons for mass mobilization by Birsa Munda.
3. To examine the magnamity and repercussion of this movement.

## Historical Background:

In colonial Bihar, the colonial government from the very beginning tried to grab the land and forest by different laws, rules and regulations. It was not at all hidden that the tribals of colonial Bihar resisted it from time to time even before the 1857 revolt. It was a general tendency of the historians and colonial administrator to neglect such uprising, rebellion or revolts in the wake of their understanding of the tribal

people. This understanding of tribal as described by historian Sumit Sarkar in his book as “part of Indian society as the lowest stratum of the peasantry subsisting through shifting cultivation, agricultural labourers, and increasingly, coolies recruited for work in distant plantations, mines and factories.”<sup>1</sup> It was such understanding which led the colonial government to penetrate inside the tribal areas being an easy target to grab the land and forest and to proselytize them for the larger goals. They did not even understand the fighting zeal with the traditional weapons which make them busy in the beginning. In the wake of industrialization, commercialization and deindustrialization, they penetrated deep into tribal areas for raw material, cheap labour and civilizing missions. The tribal rebelled on several occasions before Birsa movement in colonial Bihar. The main reformative revolts between 1765 and 1857 in Bihar were –“ Rajas of Dalbhum, 1769-74, Chuar tribe of Midnapur , 1799, Bhumij Chuar of Manbhum, Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, 1795-1800” <sup>1</sup> etc. These movements since the coming of Britishers points out to the tussle between tribes and colonial government. P. K. Shukla described the following

tribal revolts “the Kol and Sardar rebellion of 1831-33, Santhal rebellion of 1855, the tenant’s protest (1861) in Santhal Pargana, the crusade of Karoo Manjhi (1865), the Dubia Gossain movement (1870-1880), the Bhagirath Manjhi Movement (1874)”<sup>1</sup> etc. Such movements in the colonial Bihar filled a sense of hatredness towards colonial government and gave a feeling of nationalism and self pride to save the land and rights of native people. The tribal people were revolting and rebelling against the Britishers from time to time in a phase wise manner. They were giving tough fight to save their land and tribal culture. These tribal movements already prepared ground for the larger movements led by Birsa Munda.

In order to understand the Birsa Munda Movement, it would be better to understand the socio-politico-economic-cultural milieu of this region. After the decisive battle of Buxar in 1764, the diwani of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa was granted to East India Company. It must be kept in mind that Britain was the first country to get industrialized in the mid of eighteenth century and as a result they were in need of colonies and its resources. The economic needs of British east India Company and the treachery of Indian people against its own people

gave a chance to ameliorate and consolidate their power in every sense. Moreover, they needed raw materials, cheap labour, market and the local people to fulfill their need and greed. The first Chuar rebellion (1767) to the Santhal insurrection (1855), the tribals of colonial Bihar always resisted against the grabbing of land by the dikhus and the colonial government. The colonial government gave an impression that these peasant tribes were a divided group i.e. Mundas, Ho, Oraon, Paharias etc followed different cultural identity. In colonial narratives, the tribals were regarded as “aboriginals, jungle, uncivilized, primitive and savages to create division between the inhabitants of the hill people and the outsiders”<sup>1</sup>. The cultural identities of different tribal people did not mean that they completely surrendered to the colonial masters or to the outsiders. There were many instances and occasions where many people of colonial Bihar fought jointly against them. Another narratives, they popularized was that of “demonstration of ethnic antagonism against the dikhus”<sup>1</sup>. Both these narratives helped the colonial government to keep the revolts of tribal as an internal affair of colonial people. It must be noticed here that nationalism among tribes was of

supreme and utmost value when it comes to defending their land and culture. With the defeat of nawabs and Mughal emperor in the battle of Buxar, they consolidated the empire. After trouncing the mighty nawabs in Bengal, they introduce the permanent settlement in 1793 which altered the tenurial system in colonial Bihar. The colonial understanding of customary rights of tribal people in colonial Bihar was dictated through bills, acts, legislation and administration. They did not understand the bonding of these undocumented customary rights and oral traditions which was practiced by these people from time immemorial. As a result, there was always insurrection, insurgency, rebellion, resistance and revolts by these tribal people to defend its age old rights.

Another factor which came to play a decisive role in their revolts against colonial administrator was the migration by different groups into these areas of colonial Bihar which altered 'Khuntkhatti'-the original land tenure system of the tribes. These tribes especially Mundas, Santhals and Oraons were practicing settled plough agriculture. After the increase in production, the differentiation within tribes occurred and a hierarchy

developed within tribal people on the basis of it. It did not mean that they were not united when they had to fight against the colonial government or non-tribals. The "early incursions by the British into the region had resulted in the formation in about 1780 of a district known as Ramgarh Hill Tract, and Magisterial court at Sherghati"<sup>1</sup>. The colonial government tried to rule over this part of colonial Bihar through local chief but later on they dropped it and trying to control directly. Due to this, the tribes in colonial Bihar came in direct confrontation with the colonial power and a series of the revolts occurred in this region. Moreover, a large number of Hindu castes like Brahmins, Rautias and other courtiers were allowed by the Raja of Chhotanagpur to settle down in this region. "The Raja of Chhotanagpur had begun the practice of settling jagirs on his relations for their maintenance. They in their turn granted similar tenures to their dependents or creditors"<sup>1</sup>. This led to influx of many non-tribal caste and communities to this region of colonial Bihar. "The Maharaja of Chhotanagpur was blamed for introducing 'Subscriptions' and for allowing the 'dikhus' into the adivasi country"<sup>1</sup>. It was in this background that the concept of 'Dikhus' came into being which led these

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tribal people to revolt against these outsider people also. In the traditional method, the land was owned by the village communities, “the individual families having only the usufruct of the fields which they actually cultivated”<sup>1</sup>. The Mundas were followers of the Khuntkhatti system of joint landholding from the very beginning. The colonial governments replaced this egalitarian system with the Zamindari System suitable to them. The people from outside this region entered the tribal landscape and started grabbing their land and making them subordinate. In their own turf, they became forced labourers. Poverty descended on them like a strangling chain. In order to increase their revenue, the colonial administration granted police powers to the landlords. This brought Munda communities at the mercy of the Hindus and Moslem oppressors. It was at these circumstances that they fought with the Britishers several times in the past during 1789 to 1832. The legacies of exploitation continued during the time of Birsa Munda as well.

## **Birsa Movement:**

The Munda movement led by Birsa Munda had many facets. Many scholars had described about it as religious, reformatory, peasant etc. K.K.

Datta described it as the movement for “internal purification, and along with it was associated the desire to remove alien government and its supporters, the landlords, who were considered to be responsible of various socio-economic changes affecting the conditions of the people of the area”<sup>1</sup>. From 1895-1900, Birsa Munda led movement had a wider implication and connotation. It aroused a consciousness amongst the people of this region across the different tribes and Munda tribes in particular. It was the messianic movement which many scholars talked about penetrated into the minds of the people and revolutionized the whole region. During the 1890s, he started speaking to his people about the exploitation done by the British. The British agrarian policies were stifling the tribal people and disrupting their way of life which was hitherto peaceful and in tune with nature. Another problem was that of cultural belittlement of the tribal people by the Christian missionaries. At every level from the socio-economic, cultural and religious perspective, he started teaching and intermingling with the people. This led to map the minds of the people for the munda movements.

K.S.Singh highlighted the “three phases through which Sardar agitation evolved into Birsa movements: the

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agrarian phase (1858-1881), the revivalist phase (1881-1890) and the political phase (1890-1895)”<sup>1</sup>. It must be taken into consideration the different paths adopted by Birsa Munda to garner the support and mobilize and enlighten the people about their rights. There were many factors which led to Birsa movements. The most prominent were belonging to socio-economic in nature. The other factors were the charismatic personality of Birsa Munda and his power of mobilization of people on his saying and doing. The humble and poor background of Birsa Munda prepared him at the young age to feel the sufferings of the people and to search solutions for the society to the complete bondage in which the tribal people were living. This pain and sufferings gave him an inner feelings and awakening which prepared him and his followers to revolt against the government and officials. Birsa Munda was aware of all the cultural aspects prevailing in the region such as tribal, Hindu and Christian. He was baptized as ‘Daud’ and took up the mission education and understood the German Protestant mission and Roman Catholic mission respectively in its close proximity. The issues and sufferings of the tribal people led him to discover the hollowness of the Christian and Hindu

religions. As a result, he started following the tribal culture and made followers with many such miracles and curing the tribal people. It helped him in earning his faith and beliefs over the poor tribal people. He transformed himself as ‘Bhagwan’ and ‘Dharti Aba’ who had been sent by the divine power to bring happiness to the sufferings tribal people. The rituals prevailing at that time was not affordable by the tribals and hence he simplified it and made it an ideal for his followers. The people belonging to different communities and tribes became his followers. Taking up the religious path, he gathered a large number of people to take up other issues related to the society and to save tribal watan. He wanted to bring freedom for the tribal people from all the outsiders both on socio-political and religious aspects. The Sardari Larai which was prevalent since 1858 and a long drawn constitutional method did not bring any happiness to the tribal people. He assessed the pros and cons of previous movements in colonial Bihar and wanted to give it a final and last blow to the prevailing condition. Birsa Munda wanted to set up a ‘Munda land’ to be exclusive for the tribal people where everybody will be independent of any other authority and administrations.

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Having got the support and mobilization of people, he concentrated now on the direct confrontation with the colonial government. He gathered an arm band of 6000 people in 1895 to open rebellion and wanted to end the British Raj at one go. The armed tribal people were a challenge for the colonial government. Under these circumstances, the colonial government deputed the local police to arrest him. It was a tough and daunting task to arrest Birsa Munda who garnered huge followers. With the acquaintance of local people, he was arrested along with fifteen others on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1895 and put behind the bars amongst protest by his followers. They were tried and pronounced sentences and released in January 1898 after the diamond jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria. After the release, Birsa Munda changed his tactics to awaken the tribal people about the sufferings by natural calamities, famines and epidemics and apathy of the colonial government. This move of Birsa Munda led him to take up the core and day today issues which the tribals were facing. Moreover, He mobilized and trained the people to fight against the colonial government by propaganda and planning of operations. The regular night meetings with the locals helped him to garner the support of

the local people and to make them aware about the real issues. They visited each and every villages regarding their concern and also to overcome those problems prophesying the religious overtones. He was able to convince his followers that the presence of colonial government and dikhus were not going to bring any happiness and goodness to the tribal people. It was only bringing the self rule by the Mundas that the sufferings and suppression by the outsiders could be resolved. In expressing about the grievances to the people, he clearly instructed the tribal people to know who the enemies were and to go all about against them. In order to usurp the inscription of Rajas, “the first operation of Birsa after his release from jails was given in attack on Chutia temple in 1897. Birsa also attacked British rulers, the key enemy and the patrons of zamindars and other dikhus”<sup>1</sup>. He also mobilized the people to distrust the Christian missionaries who were befooling the tribal people in their struggle and making them to convert in Christianity and loosing the old rights on the lands. These Christian missionaries were also taking up the side of colonial government. In his final triumph, in the year 1899, he resumed his armed struggle along with the people. He razed police

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stations, government property, churches and houses of Zamindars. In doing so, the people gave tough time to the colonial police and administrations. The people gathered at the clarion call given by Birsa Munda and fought bravely against government. The feelings of the people to fight against the foreign power and a sense of pride for saving mother land forced Britishers to catch hold of Birsa Munda. The nationalism which he was able to arouse amongst the tribal people alarmed the Britishers. It was local treachery which landed him in trouble. He was arrested on 3rd February, 1900 and died due to cholera on 30th May, 1900 in the jail as per official version.

Due to Birsa Munda movement, the colonial government understood the basic mistakes, problems of tribal people and sense of pride for saving their age old rights. The frequent uprisings and mobilization of tribal people against the colonial government made both the party hostile towards each other. The old traditional tenurial rights of Khuntkhatti were restored. It was decided by the colonial government to take up the complete survey of land and to make compilation of record of rights. Further, general survey and settlement of Chhotanagpur region were considered.

After the death of Birsa Munda, formation of Gumla, Khunti subdivisions took place for the administrative reasons. The colonial government put restrictions on the sale, purchase and transfer of raiyats and other tenancies. The Colonial government initiated Commutation Act of 1907 to discontinue the feudal practice of Bethbegari (forced labour). The most important of all was passing of Chhotanagpur Tenancy act of 1908, which superseded the Bengal Tenancy Act taking into consideration the local customs and other such considerations which were left out in previous one. The Birsa movement also

## Conclusion:

The munda movement led by Birsa Munda had brought profound changes not only in the thinking of tribal people but the colonial administrator, dikhus and among the Christian missionaries. It also assimilated and ameliorated amongst its fold in the struggle of their socio-economic-political and cultural rights. The forest acts of 1878 were taken aback and a new arrangement introduced to suit the requirements of tribal people. It also contributed in the deep understanding of people engaged with the problems. The mobilization of people for their cause

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and taking up the issues on their own were taught by Birsa Munda. The organization skill with programmes and propaganda and wider consultation with the people helped in bringing up the core issues in forefront. This movement was a mixture of socio-economic and religious causes which impinged upon tribal people to seek final solutions. The sense of pride amongst the tribal people forced the colonial government to change its programmes and policies towards tribes.

The unity and firmness amongst the tribal people of colonial Bihar led to administrative expansion with the welfare schemes for the tribal people. The whole myth of tribal people as different and backward looking was broken and also understood the feeling of nationalism. In the long run, this movement set a tone for a wider sense of nationalism which brought fruits in the form of Jharkhand movement in the twentieth century.

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(Note by the Editor- This chapter doesn't have works cited and references.)



# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## Birsa Munda: The Brave Folk Hero

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### Introduction:

Birsa Munda was a brave tribal hero, social worker, religious leader and true proponent of Humanity. He was such a freedom fighter on which Indian parliament discusses in session. In 1988, Government of India issued a postal ticket on his name. There are a number of government as well private institutions running presently on his name. For tribals he is like a godly figure. Also, he fought with courage against Britishers. Even he defeated British soldiers many a times in the battle. He promoted tribal language and it's culture at a great extent. A number of journals, Articles, Books, Podcast, portraits have been made or written on him.

Birsa Munda was born in 1875 at Ulihatu in colonial Bihar presently comes under khunti district of Jharkhand. As he was born on Thursday, his name was kept as Birsa according to Munda

customs and Belief. Various Folk songs reflects these two popular places as his birthplace. These two places are Ulihatu and chaikad. Ulihatu was the birth place of his father Sugana Munda. Even still munda's paternal house exists in a dilapidated condition. Birsa was a brilliant student since his childhood. He was later converted into Christianity and his name was kept as Birsa David by the church. His family was like a vagabond family who travels from one place to another in the search of bread. He used to graze ships in the jungles in childhood. He was also at hand in playing Flute. Even his friends used to call him as the ustad of Flute. He was very strong and handsome by personality and soft hearted as well. He discovered an instrument called Tulia using Pumpkin which became popular in his locality.

### Rise of Birsa Munda:

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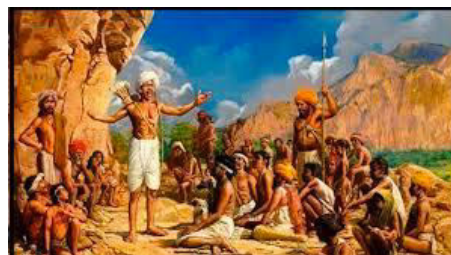
The time came when Birsa Munda began to be worshipped as God. People started calling him Dharti Abba. Later on he became famous by the name of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. All these happened due to some miraculous incident in 1895. He began to serve Munda community steadily. There was some natural incidence that shook his community. During that dark period it was Birsa Munda who served his community continuously. He emphasized on following ancestral Practices. He announced to stop following Christianity.



## Revolt by Birsa against Britishers:

A youth from tribal community, a tiger of Munda community, a folk hero who revolted against soldiers many a times was opposing British policy of levying high taxes on land. Even Britishers endeavored to suppress Birsa's popularity but unable to do so. He was imprisoned for his opposition and sent to Hazaribagh Jail for 2 years. But after this Birsa and his disciples became very popular. He used to serve people during

droughts. People began to believe in his philosophy. During 1897- 1900, Birsa Munda and his followers fought against British soldiers and defeated them many times. In 1900 Munda was announcing mass gatherings on Domebadi Mountain. British soldiers surrounded Munda and entire people who are there. Munda and his followers fought with arrow due to which many people and women died. Various people were arrested. Munda was arrested on 3rd February 1900 by British soldiers. Birsa Munda took his last breath of life on June 9, 1900 in Ranchi Jail. It is said that he died because British soldiers deceived him with poison and due to this he died. Although there he was killed physically but his teachings and philosophy is still in existence. Today Birsa Munda is worshipped as God in Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh West Bengal and Karnataka as well. In 1899 revolution, more than 7000 people who are the followers of Birsa Munda revolted against exploitative policy of Britishers. Britishers wanted to take away the ownership of land from tribes and give those lands to landlords.



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On 5th January 1900 two constables were killed by Birsa followers at Etkedih. They also attacked khunti police station and killed one constable on 7th January 1900. The colonial government introduced the chota Nagpur tenancy act (CNT) which prohibits the transfer of land ownership of tribal man to non-tribal man.

## Conclusion:

A 25 year old brave warrior became an Icon of equality, gravity and courage. He fought for his customs and teaches people to Unite against exploitative rules and regulations of Britishers. He gave a message that tribals can change a lot in the upliftment of his countryman and community as well. He invented Tulia and this musical instrument is still being used by tribal

people. He announced Mundas to believe in one single God, to avoid eating meat and drinking alcohol as well. He also told to avoid Killing wild animals for food. Birsa Munda is claimed to be as Messenger of God who had born to regain the lost glory of tribal religion.



Birsa Munda announced tribal people to go with their own traditional tribal religious system. He motivated people towards education. He gave a slogan “Abua Raj seter Jana, Maharani Raj tundu Jana” (As the Kingdom of Queen ended our Kingdom be established).

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# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## **Birsa Munda: A Real Hero in the History of Tribal Liberation Movement**

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At a time when the world has become so-called civilized, the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent have been called barbarians and hated. Indigenous people have often endured all this in silence. When injustice-torture crossed the line, the tribals revolted. It shook the foundations of the English rulers at that time. The then districts of Singhbhum, Ranchi and Palamau in Chhotanagpur, India were densely populated by Munda and other tribals. Birsa Munda, a heroic warrior, went down to fight with bow and arrow in front of the gun to liberate the country from the clutches of the British.

Birsa Munda is one of the greatest leaders of the Indian subcontinent for the emancipation of the tribals. Millions of Mundas followed him, hoping for liberation. Birsa Munda realized that the British were coming to exploit the Mundas, looting the Mundas' wealth and taking them abroad. That is why he emerged as the pioneer of the liberation of the Mundas. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the tribals

became vocal against the brutal oppression of the tribals. In the Chhotanagpur area, he emerged as a rebel leader of the oppressed and degraded Munda tribes. As writers, as contemporary social people, we are always committed to carrying all the responsibilities of a materialist historian. The crime of denial of responsibility is never forgiven by society.

Birsa Munda (184-1900) was the son of a sharecropper. He learned a little from the missionaries. He was influenced by Vaishnavism. In 1893-94 he took part in the movement against the acquisition of fallow land in the village by the forest department. In 1895, Birsa claimed to have visited God and declared himself an incarnation with magical powers to cure diseases. He foretold the Flood. Thousands of people gathered to hear Birsa's new message. This new incarnation contradicted the customs and beliefs of the indigenous people. Birsa called on the Mundas to fight against superstition, stop animal sacrifices, abstain from drugs, hold the holy abbey

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and return to the ancient tradition of 'saran' or worship in the holy abode. Birsa's activities were essentially a revivalist movement; the aim of this movement was to liberate the Munda society from foreign elements and give it its original form. Christianity also influenced this movement. In the creation of the Munda ideology and philosophy of life, the Hindu terminology was the same as the Christian terminology.

Initially, this movement of religious character was later infiltrated by political and geopolitical elements. From 1857 onwards, the Christian tribal raiyats took an aggressive stance against foreign landlords and Beth Begari. It was their 'Mulakai fight' or struggle for land. Another name for it is 'Sardari Ladai'. The nature of the Birsa Munder religious movement changed when it came in contact with the 'Sardar' movement. At first the chiefs had no connection with Birsa. But due to the growing popularity of Birsa, the chiefs took refuge in him. Although influenced by the chiefs, Birsa was not their spokesperson. Despite emerging in an agrarian society, there were considerable differences between the two movements. Initially, the chiefs were loyal to the British and even to the Maharaja of Chhotanagpur. Their only goal was to eliminate the middlemen.

On the other hand, Birsa's aim was religious and political freedom. His main goal was to establish the rights of the Mundas as the real owners of the land. According to Birsa, this right can only be established in a world free from the influence of Europeans and for that Mundaraj is needed.

Frightened by the conspiracy, the British imprisoned Birsa in 1895 for two years. But Birsa came out of jail with a more revolutionary spirit. In 1898-99, several nocturnal meetings were held in the deep forest. In these meetings Birsa called on his followers to kill contractors, landlords, kings, magistrates and Christians. The revolutionaries attacked police stations, churches, government officials and missionaries. On the eve of Christmas in 1899, Mundara tried to set fire to churches in six police stations in Ranchi and Singbhum districts. In January 1900, they attacked the police stations. Meanwhile, rumors are circulating that they will attack Ranchi on January 7. This caused panic there. However, on January 9, the revolutionaries were defeated. Birsa was captured. He died in prison while in captivity. About 350 Mundas were brought to justice. Of these, 3 were hanged and 44 were deported.

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Birsa died on the night of June 9, 1900 after being poisoned in Ranchi Jail. Although the prison report said he died of vomiting, Amasa died. Munda is buried. But Birsa was burnt in a hurry. The purpose was to cover up the exact

cause of his death. And to imply to all aborigines that he is not God, but an ordinary man. Birsa Munda was a great hero in the history of the tribal liberation movement.

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## Birsa Munda's Contribution to Indian Freedom Struggle

Diksha D. Salve

When we think of the Indian freedom struggle during the freedom struggle, there are thousands of heroes forgotten by history. Many such heroes, who made their name in gold letters in history, were born on Indian soil. One such leading freedom fighter is Birsa Munda. Birsa Munda not only fought against the British but also embraced the rights of the tribals and helped in dismantling the feudal system that was encroaching on the tribal lands in Jharkhand and Bihar. Nicknamed 'Dharti Abba' or the Father of the Earth because he encouraged his followers to return to their tribes and follow their traditions.

Birsa munda is credited with giving a major place in the history of these tribal struggles in the Indian War of Independence. Birsa Munda was born on 15 November 1875 in Ulihatu village in Ranchi district of Jharkhand. He was the first child of his parents and spent his childhood in the forest and rural areas like other Munda tribal children. When his father used to graze animals, Birsa Munda used to go to the forest with his father to practice Dharunavidya and shooting. Since reading and writing, he

has read many Hindu religious texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana and Gita.

Birsa Munda is a hero of the tribal community and an Indian tribal revolutionary. He led a mass movement against the British rule by the Munda tribes in the last year of the 19th century, so it was led by Birsa Munda. Birsa Munda felt that on the ground of conduct, the tribal society is flying like a straw in the storms of superstitions and is lost in the matter of faith. He also felt that the fog of social evils has deprived the tribal society of the light of knowledge. At the point of religion, the tribals sometimes fall into the temptation of missionaries; sometimes they consider deceptions as God. Tribal society was being devastated by the exploitation of Indian landlords and feudal lords and the British rulers. Birsa Munda considered it necessary to organize the tribals on three levels to liberate them from the dramatic torture of exploitation. The first is at the social level so that the tribal society can break free from the clutches of superstitions and deceptions and come out of the cage of hypocrisy. For this, he explained the importance of education. The second was economic reforms to



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free the tribal society from the economic exploitation of landlords and vassals. The tribals made a tremendous movement against the 'forced practice'. As a result, work on the houses and farms and forest lands of landlords and vassals came to a halt. The third was to organize the tribals at the political level. As he ignited the spark of consciousness in the tribals at the social and economic level, it did not take long for it to become a fire at the political level. The tribals became aware of their political rights.

The tribal struggle has been going on since the eighteenth century. From the hill-uprising of 1766 to the mutiny of 1857, the tribals continued to struggle. From 1895 to 1900, the great revolt of Birsa or Birsa Munda 'Ulgulan' took place. He hated and resented the black policy of the British. So Birsa Munda declared a rebellion against the British in 1900. He said, "We declare a rebellion against the principles of British rule. We do not accept the domination of the British. We will never obey the laws of the British. We will send Yamasadani to this Englishman who will stand against us." The enraged British government sent its troops to capture Birsa Munda, announcing a reward of Rs. 500 for the capture of Birsa Munda. Birsa Munda brought together different tribal groups

and taught them how to fight against the British.

In August 1897, Birsa and his four hundred soldiers, armed with bows and arrows, stormed the Khunti police station. In 1898, the Mundas clashed with the British forces on the banks of the river Tanga in which the British army was defeated at first but later many tribal leaders of the area were arrested instead. In January 1900, while Birsa was addressing his public meeting, another clash took place on Dombari hill, in which many women and children were killed. But the British government attacked the rebels on 3 February 1900 to suppress the rebels, destroyed the rebel strongholds and arrested Birsamunda. Along with them, 460 tribal youths were also arrested. Birsa was martyred on June 9, 1900.

Birsa Munda was a hero in Indian history with his revolutionary thinking in Jharkhand, India. He ushered in a new social and political era in the late nineteenth century by changing the state and direction of tribal society and challenging black laws to overthrow the barbaric British Empire. Even today in the tribal areas of Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, Birsa is worshiped like a god.

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# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## **Barsa Munda: Impact on Indian Tribal Community and His Message to the Humanity**

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### **Introduction:**

Not only did Birsa Munda battle the British, but he also supported the interests of tribal people and helped to dismantle the feudal system in Jharkhand and Bihar that ravaged the Adivasi lands. In the Chhotanagpur Plateau region, Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero belonging to the Munda tribe. When we think about the Indian fight for independence, a list of names springs to mind immediately which includes Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lokmanya Tilak or Bhagat Singh. But history has forgotten thousands of heroes. Birsa Munda was one such pioneering freedom fighter. In the Chhotanagpur Plateau region, Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero belonging to the Munda tribe. In the 19th century, under the Bengal Presidency, Birsa Munda began a tribal nationalist Millennial Campaign. BirsaMunda was born in Ulihatu, Bengal's Presidency (present-day Jharkhand), on November

15, 1875 to Sugana Munda and Karmi Hatu.

### **BirsaMunda as a prophet:**

Munda went to a missionary school, where Jaipal Nag, his tutor, persuaded his sharp young student to resume his studies and enrol in the German Mission School. He was forced to convert to Christianity because of this. Munda spent a great deal of time between 1886 and 1890 in Chaibasa, Jharkhand, which was similar to the agitation of the Sardars against the British government. Munda wanted to renounce Christianity and abandon the German Mission School, profoundly affected and disillusioned by what he saw the British and Christian missionaries doing to the Indians there.

Birsa learnt about Hindu religious doctrines from a Vaishnav monk and, along with the Ramayana and Mahabharata, read the ancient scriptures. He wore the holy string, worshipped the plant of tulsi, and gave up the meat. He encouraged his fellowmen to let go of practises in witchcraft and, instead,

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emphasised the importance of fasting, keeping away from drinking, having faith in God and following a code of behaviour. Birsa decided to change the tribal community.

## **Father of the Earth:**

He went on to establish a new faith called Birsait, where only one deity was worshipped. Birsait soon became the common religion among the Mundas and Oraons, considering his increasing presence in the tribal culture. Munda, nicknamed 'Dharti Abba' or Father of the World, urged his disciples to return and adopt their customs to their tribal origins.



Munda also preached anti-British sentiment through his faith and recruited thousands of tribal folk to form guerrilla forces to attack the Raj. In the late 1890s, Munda set out to dismantle the feudal system imposed by the British in the forest territory of the Adivasi. The British welcomed settlers from other states to come and take over jobs on tribal land in this scheme, although they pocketed all the earnings. They separate

tribes who were the original owners of the land. Tribes were thus left stripped of property and any means of subsistence. In the states of Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, his slogan targeting the British Raj is still remembered today. The slogan was "Abua raj seterjana, maharani raj tundujana," meaning "Let the queen's kingdom end and our kingdom be created."

Birsa asked his fellow tribesmen in 1895 to renounce Christianity and led them to worship one God and to show them the direction of purity, abstinence and forbidden cow-slaughters. Furthermore, he claimed to be a prophet and said that Queen Victoria's reign was over and the Munda Raj had begun. His followers declared that their real enemies were the British and not the Christian Mundas.

## **Birsa Munda and his succession:**

The legacy of Birsa Munda is still alive, and on November 15, the tribal people of Karnataka and Jharkhand commemorate his birth anniversary. Several colleges and organisations are named after him- Birsa Agricultural University, Birsa Technology Institute, BirsaKhunti College, BirsaSindri Technology Institute, Sidho Kanho Birsha University, BirsaMunda Athletics

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Stadium, Birsa Munda Airport, BirsaMunda Central Prison, BirsaSeva Dal and Birsa Munda Tribal University. Birsa, a pioneer and brave warrior of freedom movement, saw the injustice put on his fellowtribals. He gathered them in a party and led agitation against the forceful seizure by non-tribals.

The aim of his movement was to prevent his fellow tribals from becoming bonded labourers and to check their wealth's exploitation. Birsa urged the tribals to stick to their rich culture and traditions, urging them not to step under any pressure.



Birsa began the 'Ulgulan' or 'The Great Tumult' movement. His battle against tribal deprivation and prejudice culminated in a significant hit in 1908 against the British government in the form of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act. The act limited the transferring of land to non-tribals from the tribal people. His campaign compelled the Colonial government to pass the Tenancy Act of Chhotanagpur, 1908. The product of his

committed fight against the injustice faced by the tribals was this act.

## Analysis and Discussion:

- Munda still emphasised the need for tribals to recognise their privileges, history and tackle the oppression they are facing. He was also trying to rationalise his culture and get rid of their superstitious practises, sacrificing of cattle, and alcohol.
- The tribal leader, who was also a key force in the fight for a separate statehood for Jharkhand, spearheaded the movement to abolish the feudal system in Jharkhand and Bihar that plagued the Adivasi lands.
- He assembled tribal people in October 1894 and marched for the remission of taxes received from the tribes by the Zamindars. The British began shooting on the local tribal population to stop this campaign, and hundreds of tribal people lost their lives.
- Birsa was detained by the British a few months after the campaign. On June 9, 1900, at the age of 25, in Ranhi Jail, he took his last breath. The British authorities believed that he died of cholera even though he had no signs of

the disease. Several tribal leaders suggested that he may have been killed by the prison authorities. The British, however, enforced the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act eight years after his death, which prohibited the selling of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis.

- In literature and mass media, the young revolutionist continues to be praised for his impressive and courageous campaign against the British to grant native land rights.

## Conclusion:

To the missionaries, Birsa's assertion to be a prophet of God and the creation of a new faith seemed ridiculous. Birsa Munda began to urge tribal people to follow their original conventional religious tribal system. He

became a prophet figure to the tribal people who were impressed by his teachings, and they sought his blessings.

In a series of revolts and uprisings under his rule, Birsa and the Munda reacted to the twin threats of agrarian breakdown and cultural transition. In 1895, Birsa Munda renounced Christianity in Chalakkad village of Tamar, invited his fellow tribesmen to worship only one Deity and leave the worship of bongas. This courageous and robust man died fighting for the country and his tribe. The nation will never forget what he did for the Indians. His courage not only helped his tribe, but also instilled in the people of the whole country the emotions of nationalism. Birsa Munda was not able to live to see the flame that had begun to turn into a fire.

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## Life of Birsa Munda and Role of Tribal Leaders in Resistance Movement

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### Introduction:

The most dominant characteristic of the tribal resistance movement was that it was essentially an uprising against the foreign rulers and in that sense could be constructed to be the precursor of the national liberation movement which took a definite shape and gathered momentum under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi nearly one century later. It is immaterial as to what were the compulsions or motivations behind this resistance movement; it is immaterial if the tribal revolutionaries had no formal education and training in staging armed rebellions and had no common leadership to guide and spur them to action. The unmistakable fact remains that they could no longer meekly submit to the intervention of the foreign rulers in their habitat, age old customs, rituals and cultural moors. (1)

Tribal resistance movement was an integral part of Freedom movement of Odisha. In this historic movement the heroic role was played by some

distinguished tribal leaders like Laxman Naik of Koraput, Ratan Naik of Keonjhar, Dora Bisoyee and Chakra Bisoyee of Ghumsur and Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur. There are few important aspects of the tribal resistance movement which deserve mention. One is that the tribals have their own social, cultural and religious identity, their own taboos, make beliefs and peculiar compulsion of life style and therefore, any attempt of the administration of an alien rule to make an inroad into the tribal society by way of reformatory and correctional changes, however laudable, is bound to be resisted by the tribals with all their individual and collective might. (2-4)

BirsaMunda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader, and folk hero who belonged to the Munda tribe. He spearheaded a tribal religious millenarian movement that arose in the Bengal Presidency (now Jharkhand) in the late 19th century, during the British Raj, thereby making him an important



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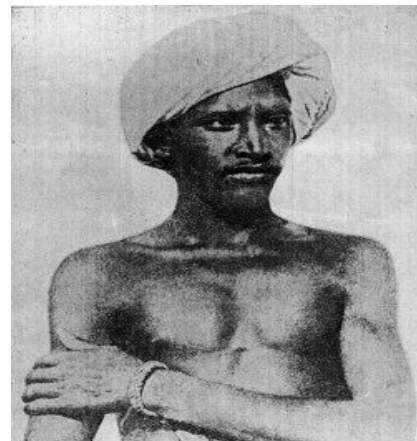
figure in the history of the Indian independence movement. (5) The revolt mainly concentrated in the Munda belt of Khunti, Tamar, Sarwada and Bandgaon. (6)

## **Birsa Munda Early Life:**

Birsa Munda was born on 15 November 1875, at Ulihatu in Bengal Presidency, now in the Khunti district of Jharkhand, on a Thursday, and hence named after that day, according to the then prevalent Munda custom. (9-11) The folk songs reflect popular confusion and refer to both Ulihatu and Chalkad as his birthplace. Ulihatu was the birthplace of Sugana Munda, father of Birsa. The claim of Ulihatu rests on Birsa's elder brother Komta Munda living in the village, where his house still exists albeit in a dilapidated condition.

Birsa's early years were spent with his parents at Chalakkad. His early life could not have been very different from that of an average Munda child. Folklore refers to his rolling and playing in sand and dust with his friends and his growing up strong and handsome in looks; he grazed sheep in the forest of Bohonda. When he grew up, he shared an interest in playing the flute, in which he became expert. He went round with the *tuila*, the one-stringed instrument made

from the pumpkin, in the hand and the flute strung to his waist. Exciting moments of his childhood were spent on the *akhara* (the village wrestling ground). He came in contact with a Christian missionary who visited a few families in the village which had been converted to Christianity and attacked the old Munda order. As he was sharp in studies, Jaipal Nag recommended him to join German Mission School but, converting to Christianity was compulsory to join the school and Birsa thus converted to Christianity and was renamed as Birsa David, which later became as Birsa Daud. (11) After studying for few years, he left German Mission School.



## **Role of various leaders in tribal movement:**

1. Birsa Munda movement
2. Laxman Naik movement
3. Veer Surendra Sai movement
4. Tana Bhagat movement

## Birsa Munda movement:

The movement, better known as *Ulgulan* (Great Tumult) was led by Birsa Munda in the year 1899. However, the ground of the movement started developing with a religious character from 1895. Herein, Birsa tried to reform the traditional religion (as revealed to him by *Singbonga*, the supreme god of Munda) and asked his followers to abandon the worship of *Bonga* (spirit) and to prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food and alcohol. He also predicted the end of the world and ordered his followers to stop paying rent to the government and to stop ploughing. Later on, the movement was imbedded with the political character where the movement looked forward to establish Munda Raj by ousting the missionaries and government by adopting violent means.

In 1895 Birsa first grew as a leader and in a short span of time he grew as a healer, then miracle-worker, then preacher and then he grew to become a prophet. (12). Altogether, this made him a prominent figure among the tribes (especially among Mundas) who saw him as their liberator. On the other hand, growing popularity of Birsa alerted the colonial regime and they demanded

for his immediate arrest. Consequently, he was arrested on 19 November 1895 and was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years with a payment of a fine of Rs 50. (13) During his imprisonment period Ranchi district witnessed severe famine from 1896 to 1897 which was followed by the heavy out-migration of Munda tribe to Assam tea plantation. Table 1 highlights that during the year 1897 there was a heavy increase in the immigration of tribes in Assam tea plantation. Subsequently this turned out to be the major cause for the Birsa movement.

**Table 1: Emigration of tribes into Assam tea plantation from 1895-1898**

Year	Total number of emigrants including children			Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana (adult)
	Assam Valley	Surma Valley	Total	
1895	35,041	37,796	72,837	18,369
1896	42,384	38,731	81,115	16,122
1897	66,952	28,979	95,931	28,078
1898	33,762	15,407	49,169	18,597

The motive behind the arrest was to control the growing influence of Birsa Munda among the tribes. But even after the arrest, he remained an inspiring force among the tribes through the medium of his disciples. On 30 November 1897, he was released and immediately after his release started organizing meetings in the

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Munda region. (14) Alongside, he continued his revolutionary teachings which lasted for nearly two years. Eventually there was an outbreak of a violent movement on the Christmas Eve of 1899 at Ranchi district.

The movement was short lived as it was cruelly crushed by the officers, who killed many followers of Birsa. On 3 February 1900 Birsa was arrested and with this, the movement also came to an end. (14) Although the movement did not last long, the impact of the movement was so powerful that it forced the state to take some effective measures to solve the problems of Munda tribes. Among such measures was the abolition of *beth-begari* system. (14) The most effective one was the introduction of Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908.

## **Laxman Naik movement:**

Laxman Naik was born on 22nd November 1899 in Tentuligumma of Malkangiri. His father was Padlam Naik. He belonged to a Bhuyan tribe. He fought single-handed against the oppressive foreign rulers with consummate skill and rare passion and fervour of a fighter. He was the very fountain of grit, courage, and strength to countless followers and co-workers and shone by rare brilliance. He sacrificed all worldly comforts and did not bow down

before the pressure of the British Imperialism. This tribal hero was not well educated, yet fully aware about the national movement. He became more active, when Gandhi's message reached Koraput. (16-19). He became an active member of the Indian National Congress. He played a key role to popularize congress programme in Koraput. The people of Koraput and its surrounding areas like Malkangiri, Tentulipada, accepted him as the real hero and devoted themselves for the cause of national Freedom. He promoted Khadi and made people aware of the congress plan of action. He took the charge of President of the Congress Primary Committee at Mathili in Koraput in 1942 (20).

## **Veer Surendra Sai Movement:**

The battle fought between Veer Surendra Sai and his compatriots on the one side and the agents of the British Imperialism on the other for nearly four decades falls in this category. It was an unequal battle fought by Surendra Sai and his brother Udanta Sai and a band of dedicated follower-fighters under the most adverse and excruciatingly painful circumstances. They did not have regular and trained armed forces; they did not have the equipments and ammunition which the British had in their possession

in abundance. Besides, the British had the formidable authority of a paramount sovereign power at their command. (21-23) He and his brother Udant Sai had practically nothing. But they were master strategists and adept in the art of guerilla warfare. They were thoroughly conversant with the topography and geography of Sambalpur and adjoining tracts. Almost all the tribal Zamindars and the village headmen of the district were on their side. The manner in which they escaped from Hazaribagh Jail after long seventeen years of detention, the fortitude with which they braved the hazards of intractable forests and hills with an extreme and inhospitable climate and the manner in which they withstood all the onslaughts unleashed by the British are matters of history.

### **Tana Bhagat Movement:**

Three months before the beginning of World War I, a new movement outraged within the territory of Ranchi district on 21 April 1914. It was started by Jatra Oraon who proclaimed that he had received a divine message in his dream from 'Dharmesh' the supreme god of Oraon. According to the message, Oraon Raj was going to be established, where he would be a raja and his followers will share the kingdom. At the same time, he was assigned a task to

reform the traditional religion (*Kurukhdharam*) and to teach incarnations (*mantra*) to his people. The followers of the new religion were supposed to lead an ascetic life where they need to prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food and alcohol and to give up the worship of (*tana*) ghost or spirit along with animal sacrifice. The main objective behind the reform of traditional religion was to uplift the social strata of Oraon community and to achieve equal status that Christians and Hindus enjoy.

Henceforth, this created a new religious sect among Oraon community whose followers came to be known as Tana Bhagats. Jatra ordered his followers to stop ploughing fields, paying rents to the landlords and to render their service as coolies or labourers to the zamindars or men belonging to the other castes and non-tribals, as their major grievances centered around rent and *beth-begari*. (14) Following this Jatra and his disciples were arrested. Although Jatrawas released on 2 June 1915, he abandoned his leadership. (14) Following him, series of leaders came into the scene and withdrew from the movement at various points of time. Altogether the movement witnessed several ups and downs.

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In the beginning of 1919, when the movement was on the verge of fading, Sibu Oraon gave a new life to the movement. Under his leadership, new rules of conduct were formulated and the restrictions on food, drinks and conducts were removed and the *tanas* were allowed to enjoy all the pleasures. Like Jatra, he also proclaimed that Oraon Raj is going to be restored shortly and asked his followers to stop cultivating the fields or to do any sort of work as god would feed them. Alongside, he ordered not to pay any rent to zamindars. He targeted the Brahmins, Rajputs, *Banias* (moneylenders), Marwaris and Mussalmans, the exploitative and the dominating section. (24) By the end of 1919, the movement under him faced the same fate like previous ones and ended. This brought the first phase of the movement to an end.

In spite of this, Tana Bhagat movement never died completely. The spirit of the movement remained alive among the TanaBhagats till 1925. From 1921 the TanaBhagats came under the contact of Congress workers, all non-tribals, who reminded the TanaBhagats that they were the original rajas of the country, who had become coolies. And if they give up drinking liquor, and using foreign cloth they could become rajas

again. (14). Following this, the TanaBhagats joined Indian national congress and played a prominent role in non-cooperation movement. Overall, it was a non-violent movement but still at certain points acts of violence took place. For example- between 21 April and 4 May 1918, the rebels looted 14 villages and killed 51 non-tribals. (14) Interestingly the movement was not confined to 'insider' and 'outsider' ideology but it also challenged the internal hierarchies within the Oraon community. (24)

## Conclusion:

The most dominant characteristic of the tribal resistance movement was that it was essentially an uprising against the foreign rulers and in that sense could be constructed to be the precursor of the national liberation movement which took a definite shape and gathered momentum under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi about one century later. The new policy introduced brought a radical change in the concept of land ownership. Tradition had conferred ownership or title to land on the basis of membership of a clan or tribe. The new policy put an end to this; it also put an end to attempts at land-grabbing by the leaders of a clan or tribe by force. Prima facie fair and equitable, this policy

caused the replacement of the clan leader by new elite as an intermediary between the tribesmen and the alien government; it destroyed the traditional balance between the tribals and non-tribals. It

also destroyed the traditional tribal economy and shattered the bonds which knit the different segments of a tribal society together. (25)

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## Revolutionary Work of Birsa Munda

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### **Introduction:**

There are a number of legends who have been overlooked by history. And afterward, there are the individuals who helped start the battle path before the dates in our history reading material. One such spearheading political dissident was Birsa Munda. Birsa Munda battled the British as well as he battled for the privileges of the ancestral network on their property and abrogated the medieval framework that tormented the Adivasi in Jharkhand and Bihar.

### **Father of the Earth:**

Birsa changed over to Christianity to join German Mission School since it was necessary to change over to Christianity to join the school and was renamed as Birsa David, which he later changed to Birsa Daud. At the point when he was in school, the German and Roman Catholic Christian unsettling was at its pinnacle. This made his dad, Sugana Munda, pull back his child from the school. 'Dharti Abba' or the Father of the earth was the Nicknamed of Birsa Munda. Bisra Munda worried on the

need of the tribals to examine their own religion and not overlook their social roots. He affected his kin to understand the significance of possessing their property and stating their privilege upon them. He is the god for the ancestral networks like The Mundas, Oraons, and Kharias. He proceeded to make another religion called Birsait, which venerated just a single god.

### **Separate of Agrarian framework:**

The British courts uninformed of the corporate idea of Tribal land possession or of the occurrence of the Mundari Khunt Katti residency confounded the Munda land framework with the Zamindari framework. The presentation of the supposed Zamindari strategy by the British executives in 1809 added up to nothing not exactly. It caused the tribals to feel spurned and forsaken. Breakdown of the Mundari agrarian framework was not a simple agrarian occasion; it shook the old society to its foundations.

### **Religion reason:**



Mundas and Oraons have faith in the impact of Asurs in their day by day method of lives. They used to revere Sing Bonga (Supreme God) through town Pahan (Priest). Munda religion under-went extraordinary change because of different variables:

- Vaishnavism: Vaishnavism had a permanent impact on the Mundas of the low-lying nation. Chaitanya on his way from Nilachal to Mathura went through Jharkhand and made proselytes among the aboriginals. In any case, the impact of Vaishnavism was restricted to the Mundas.
- Kabirpanth: The incredible archaic Saint Kabir additionally asserted believers in the Munda nation, however not for an enormous scope.
- Interaction with Hindus: The connection with Munda and Hindu religion prompted the acknowledgment of Shiva as Mahadev Bonga and Parvati as Chandi Bonga. Dasahara or Dasai celebration was seen by Mundas affected by Hindus.
- Christian Missionaries: In 1844, Pastor John Evangelist gosnor of Berline sent four preachers, E.

Schatz, F. Batsch, A. Brandt, and Th. Janne to Calcutta.

## **Revolutionary work:**

His revolutionary work not just put a successful imprint in the British standard, it likewise prepared tribals. It is because of him and numerous other such activists that tribals in India have a battling chance at ensuring their privileges. In the last part of the 1890s, Munda set out to nullify the primitive framework that the British had presented in the Adivasi land. In this framework, the British welcomed transients from different states to come and assume control over work on ancestral land, while they took all the benefits. In this way, the different clans, who were the first proprietors of the land, were left deprived of land and any methods for vocation.

Subsequently, in 1890, Birsa quit the German Mission School, surrendered Christianity and returned to his customary ancestral confidence. At the point when he left Chaibasa in 1890, Birsa wound up drenched in a full-time battle against British colonialists. What he additionally observed was the way the British principle had devastated the ways and lives of the Santhal and Munda clans by presenting rent instalment for the land and assessments on the produce. In bed

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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with the British were the neighbourhood Zamindars, who had the option to snatch huge wraps of ancestral land. By certain records, a couple of these Zamindars claimed upwards of 150 towns, while the Mundas and Santhals wound up turning into their fortified workers. Reacting to the gross misuse of his kin, Birsa and his band of faithful supporters started "Ulgulan" (The Great Tumult) or the defiance to the British colonialists. The development tried to affirm the privileges of the Adivasis as the genuine proprietors of the land and the removal of Zamindars

and the British. He used to state "*Let the realm of the sovereign be finished and our realm is set up.*"

## Conclusion:

Over a century later, Munda's heritage actually lives on, particularly in Bihar, Jharkhand and parts of Karnataka and Odisha. His progressive work not just put a compelling mark in the British guideline but it additionally assisted with assembling the tribals. It is because of him that tribals in India have a battling chance at ensuring their privileges.

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## Political Legacy of Birsa Munda

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### Introduction:

Birsa Munda (1875–1900) was a celebrated Adivasi freedom fighter, who represented grassroots leadership in the multi-colored Indian nationalist struggle against the British colonial rule. In Khunti district of Jharkhand, the nerve centre of his Ulgulan (total revolt) from where he fought the British, between 1895 and 1900, he is still fondly reminisced in Mundari folk songs and folk tales. Until the 1920s, there had hardly been any historical account of Birsa and his ulgulan either by the British officials and Christian missionaries, or by Indian scholars. Only a few of Birsa's disciples quietly recorded various aspects relating to his life relying on their memory. Notable among them was an account by Bharmi Munda (circa 1920). However, these were in manuscript mode and could not be circulated.

In the mid 20th century, the first biographies on Birsa Munda began to appear in print in the wake of Indian

independence movement, when the role of Adivasis in the freedom struggle had been recognised, and the question of their future in the new nation was being discussed. These publications by Muchirai Tiru (1949) and P G Purty (1951), both Adivasis, have relied upon their memory and a few manuscripts on Birsa, diligently preserved by his followers. Published locally, these books recovered Birsa from obscurity and put his life and works before the nation. The Jharkhand movement, highlighting Adivasi issues, and Adim Jati Seva Mandal, a national social work agency involved in Adivasi welfare, published Tiru's book to add to the knowledge on Birsa and Birsa came about to reflect Adivasi aspiration, assertion, and liberation across the country. Currently, he inspires movements and causes that work with an aim to deliver social justice to Adivasis, Dalits, among other marginalised sections.

### Summary of the Political Legacy:

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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Birsa Munda's legacy is still alive and tribal peoples of Karnataka and Jharkhand celebrate his birth anniversary on November 15. Many institutions and organizations-- Birsa Agricultural University, Birsa Institute of Technology, Birsa College Khunti, Birsa Institute of Technology Sindri, Sidho Kanho Birsha University, Birsa Munda Athletics Stadium, Birsa Munda Airport, Birsa Munda Central Jail, Birsa Seva Dal, Birsa Munda Tribal University-- are named after him.

## From Obscurity to Fame:

The early publications on Birsa Munda have stimulated scholars to carry out a detailed work around his life and political movement. The life and political movements of Adivasi freedom fighters have been generally neglected by academics and writers. For instance, Chakra Bisoyi of Kondh revolt (1850), Sidhu and Kanhu of the Santhal revolt (1855–56), Thammandora of Rampa rebellion (1879–80), Bantu Parja and Syamnath Dhakad of Bastar rebellion or Bhumkal, Jatra Uraon of Tana Bhagat movement (1914–21), Rani Guidinliu of Naga revolt (1932) have been neglected by academics. In the huge corpus of writings on India's freedom struggle, including voluminous publications by the Indian Council of Historical Research,

historians rarely cared to deal with the subject matter of Adivasi freedom fighters. Despite such a scenario, Birsa has emerged as a privileged among the lot of Adivasi freedom fighters. After the independence, the Government of Bihar published a book titled the History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar (1957) and included a chapter on Birsa by historian Kalikinkar Datta, who had earlier published a book on Santhal rebellion (1940). The chapter is, perhaps, the first academic writing on Birsa Munda. Although Datta confined Birsa to 10 pages in a large book of 640 pages, nonetheless, it stoked research interest on the subject. Then, Bihar Tribal Research Institute undertook a project on the life of Birsa leading to the publication of Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan by S P Sinha (1964). Concurrently, a young civil servant, K Suresh Singh, as a doctoral student at University of London, began working on the life of Adivasi leader and published his biography in 1966. Ever since, interest around his life and social movements has grown widely.

It is no exaggeration but Birsa is now a well-discussed subject in social science journals and other fora. The scholarly trajectory on Birsa has been noteworthy. Initially, scholars like Datta and Sinha attempted to focus on Birsa's

role to the mainstream nationalist awakening. The idea was to fill up the gap in terms of participation of Adivasis in the freedom struggle, which had been overlooked thus far. From appendix treatment, the subject has developed into a formidable topic to lend substance to leading theories in the world historiography. Wellknown scholars Michael Adas (1979) and Ranajit Guha (1999) have cited Birsa Munda to build the theory of millenarianism and subaltern school respectively. The growing importance for Birsa Munda in scholarly work has also provided subject material to popular literature and cinema. It has inspired the publication of popular books by the National Book Trust and the publications division of the union government. In 1977, Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel Aranyer Adhikar (in Bengali, and it was later translated into Hindi as Jangal Ke Davedar), centred on the life of Birsa Munda, was authored by distinguished writer Mahasweta Devi. The novel is based on the historical account brought to the fore by Suresh Singh. Film-makers have not lagged behind either. A few good documentaries have given cinematic expression to Birsa's life and social movements. Some notable documentaries are: "Birsa Munda" by the Ministry of

Tribal Affairs (2016), "Birsa Munda: The Real Hero" by Doordarshan (2018) and "Birsa Munda" by Prasar Bharati Archives (2019).

## **Paradox of Popularity:**

As the repertoire of academic, literary, and artistic works underscored his role, the nation recognised Birsa Munda as a prominent freedom fighter. As a rare token of honour, Birsa has been endowed with two memorials in Parliament: a 14-foot statue in the Parliament complex and a portrait inside the Parliament building. Another notable tribute to Birsa has been the choice of 15 November 2000 by the Government of India coinciding with his birth anniversary as the appointed day for the formation of the state of Jharkhand. The idea has been to uphold the spirit of Birsa to protect Adivasis, in whose interest the new state came into being, and to convey the government's resolve of continuing the same. Besides these, commemorative monuments have been erected at Birsa's birthplace, Ulihatu village. Many more monuments of Birsa and various other ways of commemorating him have since followed. Plans are afoot by the Government of Jharkhand to install his large statue at the old Birsa Munda Jail in Ranchi where he died.

Paradoxically, while the fame of Birsa Munda augmented, popular and scholarly literature alike has nurtured certain misconceptions around him. This leaves Birsa as half-understood, and at times, even misunderstood. A Yale University study projects Birsa as a mere extortionist in the garb of fighting for agrarian rights on behalf of Adivasi peasants, and neither an anti-colonialist nor a nationalist (Chandra 2016). A London University study echoes the same to view Birsa's revolt "not (as) an anti-colonial rebellion of the tribal freedom fighters per se" (Shah 2014: 3). Another set of writings, especially by Christian missionaries and their ilk, depict Birsa as an immature "fanatic" and an adventurist with floating ideas; his leadership is said to embody "exaggerated and distorted expression" of Adivasi awareness. Lastly, Birsa has portrayed as a sectarian pro Hindu and anti Christian instead of leading diverse Adivasi masses. That Birsa devised his own religion to be used as a mobilising force without undermining the allegiance of his followers from other faiths has also been ignored (Tiru 1949; Hoffman and Emelen 2015: 570).

The criticism against Birsa from colonialists and missionaries is understandable. Birsa, after all,

unexpectedly emerged as a fierce adversary on their way. Even his portrayal as Hindu is imaginable. The mid-20th century popular nationalism plainly perceived Adivasis as "backward Hindus" (Ghurye 1943). Strangely, the misconception on Birsa has even forayed into advance academic knowledge since. This is because existing scholarship lacks the courage to free itself from the romanticisation of Adivasi as "primitive" always tending to resort to the destined paths of violence or millenarianism when placed in a crisis, best characterised by Birsa's uprising. This syndrome inhibits scholars to discern a working resilient psyche behind Adivasis' political actions (Bara 2009). To read such psyche, scholars have to indulge in the "re-reading the colonial archive" than simultaneously making an effort to explore alternative sources (Chandra 2016: 2). The dereliction of scholarship to free itself from preconceived notions lets old ideas on Birsa to become narrative.

In the recent years, particularly since the formation of the state of Jharkhand in 2000, as the political use of Birsa's name has thrived, it has become amply clear. Some of the aforementioned admiration for and criticism against Birsa have been invoked for partisan political



ends. For example, the disregarding of Birsa's efforts for the Adivasi cause, the praising of the "constructive" role of Christians adherents and individual missionaries, and the installation of Birsa's arch-rival Jesuit J B Hoffman's statue in the region by the church have been dubbed as "insult" to Birsa (Dey 2019). Birsa's character has been tarnished in a blatant manner. Historical facts about his life and ideas have been distorted at will. These developments taint the image of Birsa Munda as an Adivasi mass leader. This state of affairs tears apart the soul of Birsa.

## **The Real Birsa:**

There is nothing spectacular about Birsa Munda's early life, which was steeped in misery. Like most Adivasis of the time, his family suffered from extensive deprivation and displacement at the hands of landlords. In the dire need for livelihood, Birsa adopted a peripatetic life, moving from one village to another. From a harsh childhood, he grew up into a young intelligent man. Yet, haunted by early bitter experiences, he was sensitive to the suffering in the Adivasi society. His youthful smile was thus eclipsed by a pensive and thoughtful look. Socially, Birsa had an eclectic upbringing. Christian missionaries preaching in the

area drew his family to Christianity. Birsa was baptised as Daud. Christianity took him to mission schools and provided him with middle-school level education, including a smattering of English. Within Christianity, his first association was with the German Protestant Mission, and later, briefly, with the Roman Catholic mission. From Christianity, he again switched back to Munda animism.

Birsa was even influenced by Hinduism of the kind propagated by Kabir Panth, which was prevalent in the area. He also came under the spell of Anand Panre, a lower caste local guru. Next, Birsa witnessed a flurry of activities of the Sardari Larai movement (1858–95), which worked towards the restoration of Adivasi rights through petitions and depositions to authorities. Emerging Adivasi issues deeply influenced young Birsa's mind. These life experiences had an influence on the leadership methods he adopted for the Adivasi cause. As the legend goes, the idea of leading Adivasis occurred to Birsa when struck by a lightning and his face glowed and became reddish, which has been described by his followers as the moment when Birsa was delivered divine power and the ability to perform supernatural acts. Seeing crowds



converging on him, Birsa assumed the role of a religious guru “Bhagwan” or “Dharti Aba” and a messiah of the crisis-ridden Adivasi society. Birsa devised his own religious tenets, practices, and prayers, drawing upon Hinduism, Christianity, and Munda beliefs. Channelling people’s support for religious belief into political action, Birsa forayed into the agrarian cause, which had already gained traction by then. At that time, Sardari Larai agitators had already been fed up with their long-drawn constitutional non-violent methods. Birsa became their new hope. Large cadres of Sardari Larai from different parts of Chhotanagpur, many Christians, and Uraons and Kharias joined Birsa. His “ardent” followers were tenacious on the land rights question (Hoffmann and Emelen 2015: 567). Birsa’s religious work took a back seat, with agrarian issues coming to the fore. This development catapulted Birsa into a mass leader.

## **Framing the Foes:**

Though supported by the Sardari Larai movement, Birsa emerged in his own right. He injected new radicalism into existing agitations in three ways. First, Birsa was outright in declaring all foreigners colonialists, Christian missionaries, landlords, and other

exploiters as dikus (Adivasis’ enemies). This was a remarkable departure from Sardari Larai leaders who tended towards showing loyalty, openly in the beginning, to the king of Chhotanagpur, the symbol of landlordism, and were reluctant to distance themselves from European authorities and missionaries. Second, while Sardari Larai believed in the constitutional method of agitation for years, despite half-hearted government responses and officials’ stony indifference to the Adivasi cause, Birsa ordered his followers to arm themselves for a concerted resistance. Third, in the place of Sardari Larai’s vague notion about “Munda Raj,” Birsa propounded the idea of a “Munda disum,” a call to gain freedom from all diku elements, and the British colonial rule was perceived as the mother of all of them, and had to be done away with completely. With these firm ideas in mind, Birsa identified friends and foes of Adivasis. The enemies were named, in local expression, as “Rajas, Hakims, Zamindars, Christians and Samsars (non-Christians),” whom Birsa asked his followers to attack (Anonymous 1911: 549).

Although it could appear like ethnic or religious cleansing, the fact remains otherwise. The guiding principle to fix the target was to see who was the

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direct exploiter or the source of exploitation. The poor non-Adivasis sharing day-to-day life with Adivasis were assured not to worry. Similarly, Christian Adivasis, initially considered as the agents of missionaries and came under attacks, were later conveyed not to fear (Hoffmann 1900). Zamindars, the traditional exploiters, were among the most hated foes. The Raja (king) of Chhotanagpur was seen as a usurper of the authority from manki Munda (a chief of a group of villages). Believing that the inscription of Raja's authority was kept in his official shrine, Chutia Temple, the first operation of Birsa upon his release from jail in 1997 was to lead a midnight attack on the shrine. Birsa also attacked British rulers, the key enemy and the patron of zamindars and other dikus. Christian missionaries were considered alongside the colonial rulers with the slogan of "topi topi ek topi," meaning hat-donning white men, whether officials or missionaries, are of the same breed. Birsa felt that, despite personal proximity

with the officials, missionaries never strived for Adivasi justice, rather they informed the authorities about Birsa's activities from villages (Hoffmann 1900). Thus, missionary and government establishments were attacked together.

## Conclusion:

Although the role of Birsa Munda has been seminal in championing the Adivasi cause, his political movements and legacy have been distorted, like other prominent Indian historical figures, including B R Ambedkar and M K Gandhi. Despite misrepresentations, Birsa Munda and his politics continue to inspire not just Adivasis but also Dalits and other marginalised sections in their pursuit of attaining social justice. In the 19th century, Birsa Munda started a tribal religious Millenarian Movement in the Bengal Presidency (Present-day Jharkhand). Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero belonging to the Munda tribe of the Chhotanagpur Plateau area.

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## Impact of Birsa Munda on Adivasi Poetry

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Birsa Munda is one of the prominent inspiring sources of Adivasi (tribal) writings. In the last decade of the 19th Century Birsa Munda fought against the exploitation of British. He declared protest against British and Christian Missionaries. The cause of his protest was the anti-tribal policies of the ruling class. Dharti Aaba Birsa Munda is the source of inspiration for many aborigin Indian poets. The term Ulgulan means protest which occurs in a number of tribal poems. Vinayak Tumram has given a new dimension to the tribal literature. Gondwana Petale Aahe, (1987) is the first poetry collection of Vinayak Tumram is based on the Revolutionary thoughts of Birsa Munda. The poet is happy to see the spreading revolutionary thoughts of Birsa Munda in the tribal society.

Birsa Munda challenged the mediator of religion. British rulers were restless about listening to his name. Birsa Munda was fighting for the rights of tribals as the poet Tumram expresses his gratitude about Birsa Munda in his poem

entitled Bihar Cha Kranti Surya Birsa Bhagwan; as the poet quotes:

"Bisa/today you are not with us/  
but in this tribal world/  
acclaiming your name as Birsa  
Bhagwan.

I see people praise you/

In the post independence period, tribals are awakening with the spirit of education. They are getting familiar with the true history of their own. Today's tribals are fighting for their rights, running their tribal movements on the precious thoughts of Birsa Munda. The poetess Ushakiran Atram in her poem "Birsa Munda" calls for Ulgulan (Revolt). As she quotes:

"Birsa once again you come/  
take birth in the womb of tribal  
mothers/  
once again you call for Ulgulan/  
our glory of forest burnt out/  
our forest is suffering by the  
incurable  
diseases"

In this way the poet shows the adverse journey of tribals. They are marching in the wrong direction. In such termoil state only precious thoughts of Birsa can save them and show the right direction.

The poet Sunil Kumar says in his poem how the thoughts of Birsa Munda

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are inspiring today's society giving strength to their every activity. In his poem The Sun God of Bihar Birsa Munda, the poet says:

“Post Independence traders  
mediators making slave to to our  
land/  
So, you Bisa! wish you live  
among us/  
Let you lit us for revolt/  
Our motherland are burning/  
Jharkhand, Bodoland and  
Nagaland/  
Tribal naxalite... malnutrition of  
Melghat/”

The thoughts of Birsa Munda are showing the path of success, keeping them vigilant. The tribals are suffering from many problems like naxalite activities, malnutrition, and unemployment and destitute, etc. In such a traumatic situation the revolutionary thoughts of Birsa Munda are really offering shelter and giving comfort. In the poem named Birasa, the poet Vasant Kanake quotes:

Didn't afraid to English men/  
You are really a great man..  
Birasa Martyrs never died/  
Your Ulgulan still burning bright"  
In History India's freedom

fighters like Tantya Bhilla, Baba Tilak Manzi, Dusehriben Kumara Bhimu and Birasa Munda all remained neglected. The poet Babarao Madhavi wants to spread the revolt of Birsa in the hills and dells of tribals through his poem named Birasa. As he quotes:

Birasa/ on every stone/  
there is your name inscribed/  
searching your town in forest/  
suffering lives forest/  
once again Ulgulan../

In his composition 'Birasait' the composer Shankar Bali expresses the need of social change in the following way:

“Birasa/ I caught in my own  
cocoon/

Tender and luxurious Hunters  
net/

Never want to break the the rich  
cotton cords/

Whenever I tried they never  
break/

When I use power my heart  
ache.../”

In today's modern world the man is going to be caught in the net of materialistic world. The attempt of protection of one's own tribal identity is an important thing. Valour of the revolutionaries of the state of Gondwana has been sung by many poets through their poems. In the middle of the 19th Century the life of many farmers became difficult by the exploitation of the mediator and the money lenders. During that time with courage and organisational work, Baburao Shedmake attempted to bring positive and revolutionary change in society successfully. In his

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composition "Revolutionary Baburao  
Shedmake of Gondwana" Vinayak  
Tumram writes:

Son of Revolution! Defeating the  
last long reign of Darkness/  
The Rising Sun of our lives saw  
by this land/  
Burning ache of your heart about  
injustice/  
Heard by the state of Gondwana/

While fighting against injustice of  
money lenders and landlords, this  
revolutionary man died showing his  
tremendous valour for their rights. But  
the marks of your noble work have been  
embossed on our heart as the poet writes  
in showing gratitude towards this great  
soul. Another revolutionary man was  
Krantiveer Narayan Sinh Uike, who  
showed the path of light in darkness to  
the Tribals of Gondwana. As the poet  
Vinayak Tumram says,

“Further we will keep continue  
hosting your flag of revolution in  
this land/

I am telling you on oath/  
And also I am telling you that/  
We will find out our path of  
emancipation/  
In an auspicious presence of your  
blessings..”

Like Marathi tribal poetry Hindi tribal  
poetry is also inspired by the work of  
Birsa Munda and other revolutionary  
great souls like legendary epic heroes  
Karna and Ek Lavya. In later time Rani  
Durgavati, Punjab Bhilla, Baba Tilak

Manzi, Veer Tirtha Simha, Sui Munda,  
Chakra Bishoi Siddho Kanho, Tanyia  
Bhil, Singai Dai and Kumara Bhimu, etc.  
also played an important role.

The legend of two brave girls is  
famous in tribal literature. There were  
Sangi Dai and Kaili Dai were two brave  
women born in Urav (Kudukh) tribal  
society. In the Rohtasgarh on the  
mountain forest, there was the reign of  
Urav tribe Singi Dai was the king's  
daughter and Kaili Dai was the brave  
daughter of the general of Urav. These  
two Brave girls fought against the  
Mughal army and defeated enemies two  
times; during the third attack Mughal  
defeated these princesses as the Mughal  
Army gathered around the fort till these  
brave women fought bravely and made  
them helpless. Atlast on the forehead of  
tribal soldiers Mughals made three iron  
marks as a mark of their victory during  
the third attack.

Life and Mission of Birsa Munda  
has become the great source of  
inspiration to the tribal society for  
solving their social problems through  
revolutionary ways. His inspiration of  
Ulgulan has become the soul of tribal  
literature. The poet Gress Kunjur  
observed, "By the revolt of Birsa Munda,  
the tribal women are ready to fight  
against exploitation. In the state of

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Jharkhand, the great work of Birsa Munda gave bright hope to the life of women. Tribal put in their hands shaft and arrows for the protection of the society. Just like them tribal women also took part in many battles and shared their work of bravery on the battlefield.”

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## Tribal Resistance and Ulgulan

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### Introduction:

The enactment of the *Forest Act of 1882* was a legislation of the colonial government that disconnected and disenfranchised the Mundas from their natural resources. This is one of the various factors that contributed to the emergence of the *Ulgulan*. The word “Ulgulan” meaning 'Great Tumult', sought to establish the right of the indigenous people over their resources which were being snatched away from them by landlords and money lenders and colonial rulers during the Pre-independence time. It is a revolution for justice and independence led by Birsa Munda who was in his twenties in India towards the end of 19th century is a prominent rebellion in the subcontinent. (YDF) Ulgulan is also known and called as Munda Rebellion. *Ulgulan* or the *Munda Rebellion* led by Birsa Munda was a struggle to maintain the indigeneity of the Adivasis, to fight the exploitation unleashed by landlords, missionaries, and colonial administration and to overthrow the external intervention.

### Causes for tribal Resistance:

The tribals' main ways of business or livelihood were shifting agriculture, hunting, fishing and the use of forest produce. With the influx of non-tribals into the traditional regions of the tribals, the practice of settled agriculture was introduced. This led to a loss of land for the tribal population. The tribals were reduced to being landless agricultural labourers. The British introduced money lenders into the tribal areas which led to severe exploitation of the local tribals. They became bonded labourers under the new economic system. The tribal societies had a system of joint ownership of land which was replaced by the notion of private property. There were restrictions imposed on the use of forest produce, on shifting agriculture and on hunting practices. This led to the loss of livelihood for the tribals. With the coming of the non-tribals or outsiders, the tribals came to be classified under the lowest rungs of society. A Forest Department was set up in 1864 by the government mainly to control the rich resources of Indian forests. The



Government Forest Act of 1865 and the Indian Forest Act of 1878 established complete government monopoly over the forested land. The work of the Christian missionaries also led to social upheaval in tribal society.

## **Major tribal Resistance events:**

1. Kol Rebellion 1831
2. Santhal Rebellion 1855-1856
3. Ulgulan 1899-1900

### **Kol Rebellion 1831:**

The Kols were one of the tribes inhabiting the Chhotanagpur area. They lived in complete autonomy under their traditional chiefs but this changed when the British came. The moneylenders and the merchants also came along with the British. The Kols then lost their lands to farmers from outside and also had to pay huge amounts of money in taxes. This led to many becoming bonded labourers. The British judicial policies also caused resentment among the Kols. There was an agitation in 1831-32 which saw the Kols organise themselves and revolt against the British and the moneylenders. They killed many outsiders and burned houses. This armed resistance went on for two years after which it was brutally suppressed by the British with their superior weaponry.

### **Santhal Rebellion 1855-1856:**

The Santhal rebellion occurred in the regions of present-day Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal against the British as well the Zamindari system during 1855-56. Because of Zamindari system, they lost their land and also were turned into bonded labourers. They had to suffer extortions, forceful deprivation of property, abuse and violence, cheating in business deals, etc. The government supported the landlords instead of helping the tribals whose grievances were genuine. The rebellion started in June 1855 when two brothers Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu organised 10000 Santhals and began an armed agitation. They killed many moneylenders and company agents. The revolt was very intense and massive in scale. The revolt was violently suppressed by the British with about 20000 Santhals being killed including the two leaders.

### **Ulgulan 1899-1900:**

The Mundas inhabited the Chotanagpur area. The Khuntkatti system, which was a joint holding of land, prevailed among the Mundas. But the advent of the British and the outsider, zamindars replaced the Khuntkatti with the zamindari system. This caused indebtedness and forced labour among the tribals. The Mundas got an able and charismatic leader in Birsa Munda who

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proclaimed a rebellion in 1894. He organised his people to revolt openly against the government. He urged people to stop paying debts and taxes. He was arrested and spent 2 years in jail before being released in 1897. In December 1899, he launched an armed struggle on the landlords and the government. The Mundas torched police stations, houses of the landlords, churches and British property. In 1900 Birsa Munda was caught. He died in jail at the age of 25. (Byjus)

## **Beginning of a new era:**

Against the sophisticated guns of the British army, traditional weapons of Adivasi rebels were no match. But Birsa's spirit and method of organising the Ulgulan conveyed to the British authorities the message from Adivasis and its importance. After Birsa's initial attacks, the British initiated a permanent measure by the Commutation Act of 1997 to discontinue the feudal practice of *Bethbegari* (forced labour). Chota Nagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act, 1908 was a result of Birsa Munda's Ulgulan. The British were compelled by Birsa's struggle to initiate in terms of reformatory measures. The Ulgulan also prompted the administrative expansion of the region, which opened education-based new job opportunities, encouraging

Adivasis to focus on attaining education. This ushered in a new era of Adivasi development. Birsa Munda and his times reflect a case of Adivasi Revolt against the oppression of British colonialism. Birsa's revolt was anti-colonial and was concerned with the reconstruction of small local Adivasi society. (Bara)

## **Agrarian Ulgulan:**

The British agrarian policies compelled the Mundas to revolt. The Mundas had followed the Khunkhatti system of joint landholding. The British replaced this with the Zamindari System, which allowed outsiders to enter these tribal areas. Mundas, who were once the landowners, forced to go landless and forced labourers resulting in impoverishment and deprivations. As a reaction to the introduction of the Zamindari system or Permanent settlement in tribal areas, Birsa Munda in 1894 declared "Ulgulan" against the British and the Dikus (the outsiders). He was soon known as Birsa Bhagwan in these areas and a huge number of tribals began to follow Munda.

## **Religious Ulgulan:**

The biggest threat for the Britishers and Christian missionaries came when Munda decided to start his own religion. In 1894, Birsa also started his own religion and proclaimed he was

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God's messenger. With the advent of a new religious order, Munda began awaking masses against the British atrocities.. Not only the tribals but also many other Hindus and Muslims also flocked to see the new leader of the masses. Birsa Munda travelled to every village to raise the consciousness of the people by combining his politics and religion. Munda forbade eating all forms of meat and also advocated for wearing the sacred threads. Along with this, many within Christianity also began to join his sect as there was no tax to be a follower as against Christian missionaries, who collected tax to let others follow Christianity. The Christian missionaries got angry as Birsa was becoming the stumbling block in the path of conversion.

## Conclusion:

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'Ulgulan' made Birsa a young freedom fighter and a tribal leader who is remembered to be a strong mark of protest against British rule in India. Born and raised in the tribal belt around Bihar and Jharkhand, Birsa Munda's achievements are known to be even more remarkable as he came to acquire them before he was 25. In recognition of his impact on the national movement, the state of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in 2000. He died in Ranchi jail on June 9, 1900 at a young age of 25. His 'Ulgulan' against the British had also forced the colonial officials to introduce laws protecting the land rights of the tribals. Though he lived a short span of life and the fact that the movement died out soon after his death, Birsa Munda is still known to be inspiration for the tribal community across the country.

# **Section-II**

## **HINDI**

## अदम्य साहस एवं वीरता का पर्याय : बिरसा मुंडा

माधवी

शोधार्थी

कुरुक्षेत्र विश्वविद्यालय, कुरुक्षेत्र

यह लेख बिहार के घने जंगलो में बसने वाली आदिम जनजाति में जन्मे साहसी, चेतनाशील, वीर-पुरुष 'बिरसा' पर लिखा गया है जो विकट-जीवन में भी अपने अधिकारों की सुरक्षा के लिए संघर्षरत रहने के लिए प्रेरणास्त्रोत बनकर कुशल-योद्धा के रूप में उभरे। बिरसा मुंडा का हिम्मत से पूर्ण गौरवशाली-व्यक्तित्व ही इस लेख को लिखने की प्रेरणा बनी। वास्तव में 'बिरसा' आज जनचेतना के लिए प्रेरणा का स्त्रोत है।

राँची के उलिहतु गाँव में करमी हातु ओर सुगना हातु के घर 15 नवम्बर 1875 में एक प्रखर बालक ने जन्म लिया। विषयुत वार को जन्मे इस बालक का नाम 'बिरसा' रखा गया। वह बचपन में काठ-पत्ते-फल-कंद-शहद लाता था। आदिम जनजाति में जन्मे 'बिरसा' में अनोखे गुण थे। 'बिरसा' के माता-पिता को भी

'बिरसा' के अनोखे गुणों का आभास हो गया था जिस कारण माता करमी 'बिरसा' के विषय में कहती हैं कि "बिरसा पेट से जना लड़का, फिर भी अनचीन्हा सा लगता है।" 'बिरसा' प्रखर- बुद्धि का धनी था। इसी संबंध में पादरी रेवरेड ने कहा था कि "बिरसा तुम्हारा भविष्य बहुत उज्ज्वल है।" 'बिरसा' जंगल की दुर्गम-दशाओं में बड़े हुए। 1888 में अंग्रेजी-सरकार द्वारा एक कानून बनाया गया जिसके अनुसार- मुंडाओं से सारी जमीन तथा जंगल वापिस लिए जाने का ऐलान किया गया। इसी कानून से 'बिरसा' में सशक्त-क्रांति की ज्वाला प्रज्वलित हुई।

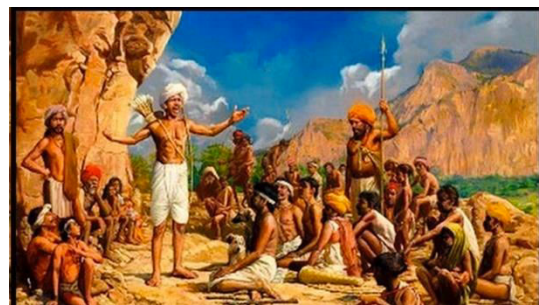


'बिरसा' ने इसी अधिकार-बोध की ज्वाला को सभी मुंडाओं में भी मुखरित किया।

‘बिरसा’ ने ‘अबुआ दिशुम अबुआ राज’ अर्थात् ‘हमारा देश, हमारा राज’ का नारा दिया। मुंडाओं पर ‘बिरसा’ की असीम आस्था का प्रभाव पड़ा जिसके परिणामस्वरूप ‘बिरसा’ ने सभी आदिवासी मुंडाओं के मन में एक नए आत्मविश्वास तथा उत्साह का संचार कर दिया। ‘बिरसा’ ने जंगल के अधिकारों को वापिस पाने के लिए तीव्र आंदोलन शुरू किया जिसे “उलगुलान” के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। ‘बिरसा’ के ‘उलगुलान-आंदोलन’ का केंद्रबिंदु छोटानागपुर का इलाका था जिसे मुंडा आदिवासियों ने अपने खून-पसीने से सींचकर आबाद किया था। इसी आंदोलन के द्वारा ‘बिरसा’ ने सभी मुंडाओं एवं स्त्रियों में भी अपने अधिकारों की प्राप्ति के लिए सदैव संघर्षरत रहने की प्रेरणा भरी क्योंकि ‘बिरसा’ इन सबको प्राचीन-जड़ता एवं कुसंस्कारों से मुक्त करवाना चाहता था और एक ऐसे आधुनिक युग का निर्माण करना चाहता था जिसमें किसी को भी शोषण का शिकार न होना पड़े और सभी को अपने जीवन का अधिकार प्राप्त हो। आदिवासी

साहित्यकार हरीराम मीणा ने ‘बिरसा मुंडा की याद में’ शीर्षक से एक कविता की रचना की जिसमें ‘बिरसा’ द्वारा किए गए ‘उलगुलान’ अथवा आदिवासियों के जल-जंगल-जमीन पर दावेदारी के संघर्ष को शब्दों में प्रतिबिंबित करते हुए कहा है कि –

“मैं केवल देह नहीं  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हूँ  
पुश्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से  
बेदखल नहीं कर सकता  
उलगुलान!  
उलगुलान!!  
उलगुलान!!!”



‘बिरसा’ मुंडाओं की आदिम सरलता, न्यायबोध की साम्य-नीति को अटूट बनाना

चाहता था जिसमें नवीन मानव-धर्म का श्रीगणेश हो। अपने इसी उद्देश्य की प्राप्ति के लिए 'बिरसा' धर्म और आस्था में क्रांति के पथ की नींव निर्मित करता है और सभी मुंडाओं के साथ सशस्त्र-संग्राम के पथ पर अग्रसर होता है और 24 दिसंबर 1899 के दिन 'बिरसा' सभी मुंडाओं के साथ एकजुट होकर अंग्रेजों के सम्मुख होता है। इसे "बिरसा विद्रोह" कहा जाता है। जंगल की कठोर जीवन-स्थितियों में जन्मे 'बिरसा' ने प्रबल प्रशासनिक-व्यवस्था को भी हिला कर रख दिया। 'बिरसा' की मुखरित हुंकार ने मौजूदा सरकार को भी गहरा आघात पहुंचाया। लेकिन भीतरी आघात से 'बिरसा' को गिरफ्तार कर लिया जाता है और 9 जून 1900 को 'बिरसा' को जेल में ही जहर देकर मार दिया जाता है तथा जेल-प्रशासन द्वारा सार्वजनिक-घोषणा की जाती है कि 1875 में जन्मा सुगना मुंडा का बेटा 'बिरसा मुंडा', जिसकी उम्र 25 वर्ष है, हैजे(कॉलेरा) के कारण उसकी मृत्यु हो गई है लेकिन 'बिरसा' की मृत्यु के बाद भी मुंडा-विद्रोह समाप्त नहीं होता।

इस प्रकार 'बिरसा' अपनी मृत्यु के बाद भी मुंडाओं में स्वयं द्वारा मुखरित की गई अधिकार-बोध की भावना एवं चेतना का अदम्य साहस देखने को मिलता है। परिणामस्वरूप 1908 में सरकार द्वारा 'छोटा नागपुर काश्तकारी कानून' बनाया गया जिसके अनुसार मुंडाओं को जमीनी-अधिकार वापिस दिए गए तथा उन्हें बेकारी से भी मुक्ति प्राप्त हुई।

रात्रि के अंधेरे से भी काले रंगरूप वाले 'बिरसा' की प्रकृति निष्पाप एवं निश्छल थी जिसने आदिम- जनजातियों पर किए जा रहे शोषण के विरुद्ध सशक्त-क्रांति की नींव रखी तथा 'जंगल को अपना मानते हुए' अंग्रेजों तथा जमींदारों द्वारा छीने गए अधिकारों को वापिस प्राप्त करने के लिए अपना सर्वस्व बलिदान कर दिया। 'बिरसा' वीरता एवं अदम्य साहस का पर्याय है जो जन-जन में बसी अधिकार-बोध की भावना एवं अन्याय के विरुद्ध लड़ने की विचारधारा है जो 'बिरसा' की तरह सदैव अमर रहेगी।

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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बिरसा मुंडा' एक प्रज्वलित ज्योति है	दमनकारोंका करे संहार,
जिनके गौरव और प्रतिभा के संबंध में मैं कहना	लिए प्रबल चेतना का प्रचंड प्रहार
चाहती हूँ कि -	जन-जन में बसा बिरसा का तेजस्वरूप
हुआ प्रगट, निज स्वरूप	पाया उद्देश्य, कर संघर्ष
पला विकट, बन निडर	प्रतिफलस्वरूप
प्रखर बुद्धि, लिए निश्छल शुद्धि	देकर सर्वस्व बलिदान। (स्वनिर्मित)

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## बिरसा मुंडा का जीवन

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बलरामपुर

बिरसा पढ़ाई में बहुत होशियार थे इसलिए लोगों ने उनके पिता से उनका दाखिला जर्मन स्कूल में कराने को कहा पर ईसाई स्कूल में प्रवेश लेने के लिए ईसाई धर्म अपनाना जरूरी हुआ करता था इसलिए बिरसा का नाम परिवर्तन कर डेविड रख दिया गया। कुछ समय तक पढ़ाई करने के बाद उन्होंने जर्मन मिशन स्कूल छोड़ दिया क्योंकि बिरसा के मन में बचपन से ही साहूकारों के साथ-साथ ब्रिटिश सरकार के अत्याचारों के खिलाफ विद्रोह की भावना पनप रही थी। इसके बाद बिरसा ने जबरन धर्म परिवर्तन के खिलाफ लोगों को जागृत किया तथा आदिवासियों की परंपराओं को जीवित रखने के लिए कई प्रयास किए।

1894 में वर्षा ना होने के कारण छोटा नागपुर में भयंकर अकाल और महामारी फैली हुई थी। बिरसा ने पूरे समर्पण से अपने लोगों की सेवा की उन्होंने लोगों को अंधविश्वास से बाहर निकल बीमारियों का इलाज करने के प्रति जागरूक किया। बिरसा अपने दवा के ज्ञान और बीमारों को ठीक करने की शक्ति के कारण जाने जाने लगे। 1895 ई. में बिरसा ने अपने आप को 'भगवान का दूत' घोषित किया। उन्होंने कहा कि भगवान ने उन्हें गजब की ताकत दी है अब हजारों आदिवासी उन्हें देखने व सुनने लगे उन्होंने अपने समर्थकों को 'सिंगबोंगा' की पूजा करने की सलाह दी। आदिवासियों के लिए वे 'धरती आबा' यानी 'धरती पिता' हो गए।

मुंडा जनजाति में सामूहिक खेती का प्रचलन था जिसे खूंटकट्टी कहा जाता था लेकिन वहां के जमींदारों, ठेकेदारों एवं महाजनों ने खेती की परंपरा पर ब्रिटिश सरकार के सानिध्य में हल्ला बोला। अंग्रेजों ने इंडियन फॉरेस्ट एक्ट 1882 पारित कर आदिवासियों को जंगल के अधिकार से वंचित कर दिया। अंग्रेजों ने जमींदारी व्यवस्था लागू कर आदिवासियों के वो गांव जहां वे सामूहिक खेती करते थे जमींदारों और दलालों में बांट कर राजस्व की नई व्यवस्था लागू कर दी, और फिर शुरू हुआ अंग्रेजों, जमींदार व महाजनों द्वारा भोले-भाले लोगों का शोषण।

1895 में बिरसा ने अंग्रेजों के द्वारा लागू की गई जमींदारी प्रथा और राजस्व व्यवस्था के खिलाफ लड़ाई के साथ-साथ जंगल-जमीन की लड़ाई छेड़ी। इस प्रकार मुंडा जनजाति ने एक आंदोलन प्रारंभ किया जिसे मुंडा, उलगुलान या महाविद्रोह कहा गया। मुंडा आदिवासियों ने विद्रोह का प्रारंभ सन 1974 ईस्वी से किया परंतु

1895 ई. के बाद इसका नेतृत्व बिरसा मुंडा ने किया जो 1901 तक चला।

उलगुलान विद्रोह आदिवासियों का जंगल-जमीन पर दावेदारी का संघर्ष था। यह सिर्फ आदिवासी बगावत नहीं थी बल्कि यह तो आदिवासी स्वाभिमान, स्वतंत्रता और संस्कृति को बचाने का संग्राम था। शोषण के खिलाफ विद्रोह की चिंगारी बिरसा ने फूँकी और अपने लोगों को गुलामी से आजादी दिलाने के लिए बिरसा ने 'उलगुलान'(जल-जंगल-जमीन पर दावेदारी) की अलख जगाई। बिरसा ने 'अबुआ दिशुम अबुआ राज' यानी 'अपना देश अपना राज' का नारा दिया। देखते ही देखते सभी आदिवासी इकट्ठे हो गए। अब अंग्रेजी सरकार के पांव उखड़ने लगे और भ्रष्ट जमींदार व पूंजीवादी बिरसा के नाम से भी काँपते थे। अंग्रेजी सरकार ने बिरसा के उलगुलान को दबाने की हर संभव कोशिश की लेकिन आदिवासियों के गुरिल्ला युद्ध के आगे उन्हें असफलता ही मिली।

1897 से 1900 के बीच आदिवासियों और अंग्रेजों के बीच कई लड़ाइयां हुईं पर हर बार अंग्रेजी सरकार ने मुंह की खाई। जिस बिरसा मुंडा को अंग्रेजों की तोप और बंदूकों की ताकत नहीं पकड़ पाई उसके बंदी बनने के कारण अपने ही लोगों का धोखा बना। जब अंग्रेजी सरकार ने बिरसा को पकड़वाने के लिए 500 की धनराशि के इनाम की घोषणा की तो किसी अपने ही व्यक्ति ने बिरसा के ठिकाने का पता अंग्रेजों तक पहुंचाया। जनवरी 1900 में उलिहातू के नजदीक डोमबाड़ीपहाड़ी पर बिरसा अपनी जनसभा को संबोधित कर रहे थे तभी अंग्रेज सिपाहियों ने चारों तरफ से घेर लिया और अंग्रेजों और आदिवासियों के बीच लड़ाई हुई। औरतें और बच्चों समेत बहुत से लोग मारे गए। अंत में बिरसा भी 3 फरवरी 1900 को चक्रधरपुर से गिरफ्तार कर लिए गए। 9 जून 1900 को बिरसा ने रांची की कारागार में आखिरी सांस ली। 25 साल की उम्र में बिरसा मुंडा ने जिस क्रांति का आगाज किया वह आदिवासियों को हमेशा प्रेरित करती रहेगी। आज भी बिहार, उड़ीसा, झारखंड,

छत्तीसगढ़ और पश्चिम बंगाल के आदिवासी इलाकों में बिरसा मुंडा को भगवान की तरह पूजा जाता है। बिरसा मुंडा की समाधि रांची में कोकर के निकट डिस्टलरी पुल के पास स्थित है और वहीं उनकी मूर्ति भी लगी है। उनकी स्मृति में रांची में बिरसा मुंडा केंद्रीय कारागार तथा बिरसा मुंडा हवाई अड्डा भी है।

हिंदी साहित्य की महान लेखिका व उपन्यासकार महाश्वेता देवी ने अपने कालजयी उपन्यास 'जंगल के दावेदार' में बिरसा मुंडा के जीवन व आदिवासी स्वाभिमान के लिए उनके संघर्ष का मार्मिक रूप से वर्णन करते हुए उन्होंने लिखा है- 'अगर उसे उसकी धरती पर दो वक्त दो थाली घाटों, वर्ष में चार मोटे कपड़े, जाड़े में पुआल- भरे थैले का आराम, महाजन के हाथों छुटकारा, रोशनी करने के लिए महुआ का तेल, घाटों खाने के लिए काला नमक, जंगल की जड़ें और शहद, जंगल के हिरण और खरगोश- चिड़ियों आदि का मांस- ये सब मिल जाते तो बिरसा मुंडा शायद भगवान न बनता।' इसके अलावा 'बिरसा मुंडा की याद में' शीर्षक से यह

कविता आदिवासी साहित्यकार हरीराम मीणा ने  
लिखी है जो इस प्रकार है-

“मैं केवल देह नहीं  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हूँ  
पुस्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से बेदखल नहीं कर  
सकता  
उलगुलान !  
उलगुलान !!  
उलगुलान !!!

बिरसा मुंडा भारत के एक आदिवासी  
स्वतंत्रता सेनानी और लोक नायक थे। अंग्रेजों  
के खिलाफ स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में उनकी ख्याति  
जगजाहिर थी। सिर्फ 25 साल के जीवन में  
उन्होंने इतने मुकाम हासिल किए कि हमारा  
इतिहास सदैव उनका ऋणी रहेगा। बिरसा के  
जाने के इतने सालों बाद आज भी उनका संग्राम  
जारी है बहुत से आदिवासी संगठन हैं जो जंगल  
पर दावेदारी के लिए आज भी संघर्ष कर रहे हैं  
इन सभी ने मिलकर बिरसा का उलगुलान जारी  
रखा है, इन सभी के प्रेरणा स्रोत हैं बिरसा मुंडा।

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## भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम मे बिरसा मुंडा का अविस्मरणीय योगदान

डा. मोनिका मित्तल

बिरसा मुंडा एक अविस्मरणीय व्यक्तित्व, स्वतंत्रता सेनानी, जनजातीय नेता, मुंडाओं का भगवान, धरती अब्बा जिसने दीकूओं व अँग्रेजों के विरुद्ध जल, जंगल व ज़मीन के परम्परागत जनजातीय अधिकारों हेतु संघर्ष किया एवं अपने प्राणों की आहुति दे दी वह भी मात्र 25 वर्ष की अल्पायु मे। ऐसे अमर सेनानी की मृत्यु के 100 वर्ष पश्चात उनकी जन्म वर्षगाँठ 15 नवंबर 2000 पर झारखंड राज्य का निर्माण उन्हें सच्ची व यथोचित श्रद्धांजलि है

अवयस्क बिरसा तरुण काल से ही दासत्व व अंग्रेजी शोषण के विरुद्ध गहरी समझ रखता था। उससे मुक्ति हेतु बिरसा ने जनजातीय निरक्षर लोगों को संगठित कर अपने अधिकारों हेतु समुचित अभियान चलाया जो इतना सशक्त व प्रभावशाली था कि बिरसा को पकड़ने के लिए अंग्रेजों ने उस पर 500 का इनाम घोषित किया जो उस समय के हिसाब से बहुत बड़ी रकम थी। बिरसा के व्यक्तित्व से प्रभावित

होकर अनेक साहित्यकारों ने अपनी रचनाओं में बिरसा को स्थान दिया उस पर फिल्मों का निर्माण भी किया गया | वह अकेले ऐसे जनजातीय नेता हैं जिनकी तस्वीर संसद के संग्रहालय में लगाई गई है | झारखंड राज्य में उनकी 150 फुट ऊंची मूर्ति का निर्माण प्रस्तावित है | बिरसा मुंडा का भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में योगदान न केवल आदिवासियों को उनके अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक कर संगठित करने अपितु महारानी की सत्ता को उखाड़ फेंक अपनी सत्ता स्थापित करने के प्रयास हेतु भी अविस्मरणीय रहेगा जिस से आने वाली पीढ़ियां निरंतर प्रेरणा प्राप्त करती रहेंगी | उनके योगदान को समझने के लिए उनकी पृष्ठभूमि, शिक्षा व तत्कालीन परिस्थितियों को आत्मसात करना अत्यंत आवश्यक है |

### प्रारंभिक जीवन:

बिरसा का जन्म छोटा नागपुर पठार क्षेत्र की मुंडा जनजाति में 15 नवंबर 1875 को

सुगना मुंडा व करमी हातू के घर उलीहातू, तत्कालीन बंगाल रियासत वर्तमान झारखंड राज्य के खूंटी जिला, में हुआ। बिरसा मुंडा का परिवार श्रमिक या फसल बटाईदार के काम की तलाश में पहले कुरुमवदा व फिर बांबा चला गया। अत्यधिक गरीबी के कारण बिरसा को उसके ननिहाल आयुभट्ट क्षेत्र में भेज दिया गया जहां वह 2 वर्ष तक रुका। उसने अपनी प्रारंभिक शिक्षा सलगा में अपने शिक्षक जयपाल नाग से प्राप्त की। अपने शिक्षक की ही सलाह पर बिरसा ने जर्मन मिशन स्कूल में प्रवेश पाने के लिए ईसाई धर्म स्वीकार कर लिया। बिरसा यहां बिरसा डेविड फिर बिरसा डॉड हो गया। कुछ वर्ष पढ़ने के पश्चात बिरसा ने यह कहकर कि 'साहेब साहेब एक टोपी है' स्कूल से अपना संबंध विच्छेद कर लिया। मिशनरी स्कूल में बिरसा ने ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यवादी शासन व ईसाई मिशनरियों के आदिवासियों के धर्म परिवर्तन हेतु किए प्रयासों को गहराई से जाना जो आगे चलकर उनके महान उलगुलान आंदोलन के सूत्रपात बने।

## बिरसा का स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष

मिशन स्कूल छोड़ने के पश्चात सर्वप्रथम बिरसा व उसके परिवार ने ईसाई धर्म का त्याग किया फिर से हिंदू धर्म की ओर अग्रसर हुए। तत्पश्चात बिरसा में बिरसई या फिर बिरसत का आधार रखा और आदिवासी उनके नए पंथ से जुड़कर एक ईश्वर में विश्वास रखने लगे। बिरसा ने स्वयं को ईश्वर का ही रूप घोषित किया। बिरसा का संघर्ष मूलतः तीन चीजों के विरुद्ध था-

1. जनजाति में व्याप्त अंधविश्वास और अज्ञानता के विरुद्ध
2. ईसाई मिशनरियों द्वारा मुंडाओं का धर्म परिवर्तन करने के विरुद्ध
3. जल जमीन जंगल के जनजातीय अधिकारों की रक्षा हेतु दीकू व अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध

**जनजाति में व्याप्त अंधविश्वास और अज्ञानता के विरुद्ध:**

मिशनरी स्कूल में शिक्षा प्राप्त करने के कारण बिरसा को मुंडा समाज में व्याप्त

अंधविश्वास व अज्ञानता का बोध हुआ। इसी कारण आदिवासियों में प्रचलित अंधविश्वास कि महामारी आदि दैवीय प्रकोप है, को दूर करने के लिए बिरसा उन्हें उपदेश देते। जो आदिवासी मानते थे कि हैजा, चेचक, सर्पदंश या बाघ द्वारा खा लिए जाना ईश्वर का प्रकोप है। बिरसा उन्हें सिखाते कि चेचक, हैजा से कैसे लड़ा जाता है। सर्प दंश दैवीय प्रकोप नहीं वरन उसका इलाज किया जा सकता है, इत्यादि। लोग उनके पास अपनी समस्याओं के निदान के लिए आने लगे। मुंडा, औराओं व खरिया जनजाति के बहुत से लोगों ने बिरसत को अपनाया। वे उसे धरती अब्बा कहकर पुकारने लगे। समकालीन गीतों व लोकगीतों में बिरसा का महिमामंडन इस बात का द्योतक है कि जनजातीय समाज पर बिरसा का कितना गहरा प्रभाव था।

## ईसाई मिशनरियों द्वारा मुंडाओं का धर्म परिवर्तन करने के विरुद्ध

बिरसा ने ईसाई मिशनरियों के जनजातीय समाज के धर्म परिवर्तन मिशन को बहुत अच्छे से समझ लिया था। बिरसत ब्रिटिश

धर्म परिवर्तन मिशन के लिए सबसे बड़ी चुनौती के रूप में परिवर्तित हुआ। उसने जनजातीय ईसाइयों को ईसाई धर्म का परित्याग कर फिर से अपनी आदिवासी संस्कृति की ओर उन्मुख होने का आह्वान किया। उसने कहा – “हमें अपनी मौलिक जनजातीय संस्कृति को कभी भी नहीं भूलना चाहिए।” बिरसा ने आदिवासी समाज को शुद्धता स्वच्छता का पाठ सिखाया एवं उन्हें गोवध से दूर रहने के लिए कहा। बिरसा ने कहा कि मुंडा ईसाई हमारे दुश्मन नहीं वरन ब्रिटिश हमारे असली दुश्मन है। बिरसा की मुहिम ने ईसाई मिशनरियों के मिशन को विफल कर दिया तथा वह उनके लिए एक सशक्त चुनौती बन गया।

## जल जमीन जंगल के जनजातीय अधिकारों की रक्षा हेतु दीकू व अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध

ब्रिटिश सरकार की नीतियों के कारण आदिवासी लगातार जल जंगल और जमीन के अपने पारंपरिक अधिकारों से वंचित किए जा रहे थे। इन संसाधनों पर दीकू अर्थात बाहरी व्यक्तियों का आधिपत्य होता जा रहा था।

आदिवासियों को अपने जीवन यापन के लिए संसाधन लगातार दुर्लभ होते जा रहे थे | ऐसे में बिरसा ने अपने अनुयायियों को इकट्ठा कर गोरिल्ला सेना तैयार कर ली | 19वीं सदी के अंतिम दशक में मुंडा ने ब्रिटिश राज के प्रतीक स्थानों यथा पुलिस स्टेशन, दुकानों, बाहरी दुकानदारों, अफसरों पर हमले करने प्रारंभ कर दिए | बिरसा ने नारा दिया 'अबुआ राज सेतेर जाना महारानी राज टुंडू जाना' अर्थात् महारानी का राज्य समाप्त कर दिया जाएगा और हमारा राज्य स्थापित किया जाएगा | यह सोच यह नारा अपने आप में मुंडा राष्ट्रवाद का परिचायक था |

1890 से 1900 तक मुंडा व ब्रिटिश राज में छापे मार लड़ाई चलती रही | अंतिम निर्णायक युद्ध 1900 में रांची के पास दुम्बरि पहाड़ी पर हुआ | तीर कमान और भालों से लड़ रहे आदिवासी ब्रिटिश बंदूकों और तोपों से बेरहमी से मार दिए गए | स्टेट्समैन अखबार के 25 जनवरी 1900 के अंक के अनुसार इस युद्ध में 400 लोग मारे गए |

बिरसा पकड़े नहीं जा सके परंतु अंततः 500 के लालच में मुंडाओं ने बिरसा को उस समय पकड़वा दिया जब वह चक्रधरपुर में जम्कोड़ जंगल में अपनी सेना के साथ सो रहा था | बिरसा को फरवरी-मार्च उन्नीस सौ में गिरफ्तार कर जेल में डाल दिया गया जहां जेल में ही 9 जून 1900 को बिरसा की संदिग्ध अवस्था में मृत्यु हो गई |

उसकी मृत्यु के साथ ही ब्रिटिश राज के विरुद्ध महान उलगुलान आंदोलन समाप्त हो गया आदिवासी संस्कृति, स्वायत्तता एवं अस्मिता की रक्षा का यह संग्राम किसी स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष से कम नहीं था | यह राष्ट्रवाद की संगठित विचारधारा से प्रेरित था; वह भी ऐसे समाज में जहां शिक्षा एवं संसाधनों दोनों ही चीजों का नितांत अभाव था | यह बिरसा के आंदोलन का ही प्रभाव था कि उसकी मृत्यु के लगभग एक दशक बाद ब्रिटिश ने छोटा नागपुर टेनेंसी एक्ट पारित किया जिसके अनुसार किसी भी जनजाति की जमीन को किसी गैर जनजातीय



व्यक्ति को हस्तांतरित नहीं किया जा सकता था |

## उपसंहार

प्रसिद्ध उपन्यासकार महाश्वेता देवी ने बिरसा मुंडा पर बंगला उपन्यास 'आरण्य अधिकार' अर्थात 'जंगल के दावेदार' लिखा जिसके लिए उन्हें 1979 का बंगला भाषा का साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार भी प्रदान किया गया। इसमें उन्होंने लिखा - "सवेरे 8:00 बजे बिरसा मुंडा खून की उल्टी कर अचेत हो गया | बिरसा मुंडा, सुगना मुंडा का बेटा, उम्र 25 वर्ष - विचाराधीन बंदी ; 30 फरवरी को बिरसा पकड़ा गया था किंतु उस माह के अंतिम सप्ताह तक बिरसा और अन्य मुंडाओं के विरुद्ध केस तैयार नहीं हुआ था | क्रिमिनल प्रोसीजर कोड की बहुत सी धाराओं में मुंडा पकड़ा गया था लेकिन बिरसा जानता था उसे सजा नहीं होगी | डॉक्टर को बुलाया गया, उसने मुंडा की नाड़ी देखी वह बंद हो चुकी थी; बिरसा मुंडा नहीं मरा था आदिवासी मुंडाओं का भगवान मर चुका था |"

आदिवासियों की समस्याएं आज भी वही हैं | ईसाई मिशनरीज़ आज भी उनके धर्म परिवर्तन करने की दिशा में अग्रसर हैं | आदिवासियों को बाहरी हस्तक्षेप आज भी स्वीकार नहीं है | 2018 में अंडमान निकोबार के सेंटिनल द्वीप पर अमेरिकी नागरिक जॉन एलेन चाउ की सेंटिनलिज़ आदिवासियों द्वारा तीर से हत्या कर दी गई | जॉन एलेन ईसाई मिशनरी से जुड़ा था और वह इन आदिवासियों को कन्वर्ट करने के साथ एडवेंचर करना चाहता था | इस तरह की घटनाएँ अवांछनीय हैं |

यद्यपि भारत सरकार उन्हें देश की मुख्यधारा में लाने के लिए निरंतर अथक प्रयास कर रही है तथापि यह कार्य उनके समाज से ही बिरसा की भांति किसी समाज सुधारक द्वारा ही सफलतापूर्वक किया जा सकता है | ऐसे में कवि भुजंग मेश्राम की पंक्तियों का यहां उल्लेख करना समुचित है

“बिरसा तुम्हें कहीं से भी आना होगा

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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घास काटती दरान्ति हो या लकड़ी काटती कुल्हाड़ी

यहां वहां से, पूरब पश्चिम , उत्तर दक्षिण से

कहीं से भी आ मेरे बिरसा

खेतों की बयार बनकर

लोग तेरी बाट जोहते |”

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## बिरसा मुंडा का जीवन कार्य

श्री राकेश चौहान (योगाचार्य)

संस्था: कैवल्यधाम योग केन्द्र भोपाल  
योग आयाम समिति योग केन्द्र होशंगाबाद मध्य प्रदेश  
मेन रोड मालाखेडी होशंगाबाद (म.प्र)

### परिचय:

बिरसा मुंडा का जन्म अडकी अंतर्गत ग्राम-उलीहातु में 15 नवंबर 1875 को हुआ था। इसके पिता का नाम सुगना मुंडा और माता का नाम करमी था। बिरसा के पूर्वज चुटू मुंडा और नागू मुंडा थे। वे पूर्वी गोत्र के थे। वे रांची के उपनगर चुटिया में रहा करते थे। कहा जात है कि इन दो भाईयों के नाम से इस क्षेत्र का छोटानागपुर पड़ा। चुटिया में अनेक सालों तक इनका समय बीता।

### आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक जीवन:

ग्राम- उलीहातु में बिरसा वंशजों की आर्थिक स्थिति काफी बिगड़ी हुई थी। परिस्थिति से विवश होकर खेत में काम करने वाले मजदूरों या बंटाईदार अथवा रैयतों के रूप में काम की तलाश में बिरसा

के पिता, मा और चाचा उलीहातु छोड़कर बीरबांकी की निकट कूडुम्बदा चले गये। वहां से परिवार चम्बा चला गया और चलकद आये। चलकद में आकर वे गाव के मुंडा बिसिन्हके यहा शरण लिए। बिरसा के जन्म के बहुत दिन पहले ही उसके बड़े पिता कानू उलिहातु में ईसाई बन चुके थे। इनका मसीही नाम पौलूस थ। बिरसा के पिता सुगना और उसके छोटे भाई फसना ने बम्बा जाकर ईसाई धर्म स्वीकार कर लिया। यहा तक की सुगना तो जर्मन ईसाई मिशन के प्रचारक भी बन गए थे। इसलिए बिरसा भी अपने पिता के साथ ईसाई हो गये। सुगना का मसीही नाम मसीहदस और बिरसा का दाउद मुंडा पड़ा। बिरसा को दाउद बिरसा भी कहा जाता था। इस तरह से बिरसा का परिवार उलगुलान होने तक चलकद में ही

रहा और बिरसा का बचपन भी अपने माता-पिता के साथ काफी दिनों तक चलकद में ही व्यतीत हुआ ।

गरीबी के कारण कुछ बड़े होने पर बिरसा का अपने मामा घर अयुबहातु ले जाया गया । बिरसा के बड़े भाई कौता मुंडा 10 साल के उम्र में कूंदी चला गया । वहां एक मुंडा के यहा नौकरी करने लगा और काफी अर्से तक वहीं रह गया था । बाद में उनकी शादी उसी गाव की एक मुंडा लडकी से हुई । बिरसा अयुबहातु में दो साल तक रहा । वहीं रहते जयपाल नाग द्वारा संचालित सलगा स्कूल में दाखिला होकर आरंभिक शिक्षा प्राप्त की । कुछ दिनों बाद उनकी सबसे छोटी मौसी जौनी की शादी खटंगा में हो गई चूंकि बिरसा अपनी मौसी का बड़ा प्यारा था । इसलिए शादी के बाद उसे अपने साथ खटंगा लेती गई । यहा से ईसाई प्रचारक से उनका संपर्क हुआ । वह प्रचारक मुंडाओं की पुरानी धर्म व्यवस्था की आलोचना किया करता। यह बिरसा को

बिल्कुल अच्छा नहीं लगा । वह इस चिंता में भाव-मग्न होकर अध्ययन में इतना तल्लीन रहता था कि उसे भेड -बकरियों को चराने के लिए सोंपे गये कार्यों को भी मन लगाकर नहीं निभा पाता था । इस कारण से उसे कभी-कभी अपनी मौसी तथा अन्य लोगों से डांट भी मिल जाया करती थी । फलतः उसने वह वहां कुछ समय तक रहा। वहां से वह बुडजो स्थित जर्मन मिशन स्कूल में भर्ती हो गया और वहीं से निम्न प्राथमिक की शिक्षा उसे प्राप्त करने के लिए जर्मन ईसाई मिशन स्कूल चाईबासा में 1886 ई.में अपना दाखिला ले लिया।

चाईबासा में बिरसा चार सालो (1886 से 1890) तक रहा इस बीच उनके साथ एक रोचक घटना घटी । एक बूढ़ी महिला ने उसके माथे की रेखाओं का निरीक्षण करने के बाद यह भविष्यवाणी की थी कि वह एक दिन बहुत बड़ा काम कर दिखायगा और एक महान व्यक्ति बनेगा । इस अवधि में जर्मन-लूथेरन और रोमन

कैथोलिक ईसाईयों के भूमि आन्दोलन चल रहे थे । एक दिन चाईबासा मिशन में उपदेश देते हुए डा. नोट्रेट ने ईश्वर के राज्य के सिद्धान्त पर विस्तार से प्रकाश डाला । इस उपदेश के श्रोता के रूप में बिरसा भी उपस्थित था डा. नोट्रेट का कहना था कि यदि वे ईसाई बने रहेंगे और उनके अनुदेशों का अनुपालन करते रहेंगे तो उनकी छिनी हुई जमीन की वापसी कर दी जाएगी । इस बात से बिरसा को और अन्य लोगों को भी बड़ा धक्का लगा और 1886-87 में मिशनरियों से सरदारों का संबंध विच्छेद हो गया। उसके बाद मिशनरियों ने सरदारों को धोखेबाज कहना शुरू किया । बिरसा ने उसी समय डा. नोट्रेट और मिशनरियों को बहुत ही तीखे शब्दों में आलोचना की । इसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि बिरसा को स्कूल से निकाल दिया गया। इस घटना के बाद उसने अपनी आवाज बुलंद की साहब एक टोपी है। अर्थात् गोरे अंग्रेज और मिशनरी एक जैसे हैं । चाईबासा में रहकर बिरसा

उच्च प्राथमिक स्तर की शिक्षा पाई और हिंदी और अंग्रेजी की थोड़ी बहुत जानकारी हुई हिंदी बोल लेता किन्तु अंग्रेजी में बातचीत नहीं कर पाता था । बिरसा 1890 में चाईबासा छोड़ दिया और उसके तुरंत बाद उसने जर्मन ईसाई मिशन की सदस्यता भी छोड़ दी । इसके साथ उनके और भी सहपाठी भी थे जिन्होंने इनका साथ दिया उसने छोड़ दी उसने जर्मन मिशन त्याग कर रोमन कैथोलिक मिशन धर्म स्वीकार किया । उसके साथ कुछ दिनों तक रहा, पर बाद में उस धर्म के प्रति भी उनके मन में विरक्ति आने लगी। ऐसी बार सरदारों के आन्दोलन के साथ भी हुई। उन लोगों ने जिन मांगों को लेकर रोमन कैथोलिक मिशन का समर्थन प्राप्त करना चाहा था । उस ओर से वे निराश होकर अपनी पुरानी धर्म की ओर लौट आये। इस तरह से वे मिशन धर्म का त्याग कर अपने धर्म की आस्था पर विशेष बल देने लगे ।

चाईबासा से लौटने के बाद बिरसा करीब एक वर्ष तक अपनी बड़ी बहन दसकीर के यहा कांडेर में समय बिताया। सन 1891 में वह बंदगाव पांड से होता है। आनंद पांड कोई पण्डित नहीं था बल्कि बंदगाव के गैर मुंडा आदिवासी जमींदार जगमोहन सिंह के मुंशी था आनंद पांड, स्वांसी जाति का एक धार्मिक व्यक्ति था उससे मिलकर बिरसा ने वैष्णव धर्म के प्रारम्भिक सिद्धांतों और रामायण महाभारत की कथाओं की कथाओं का श्रवण कर ज्ञान हासिल किया । आनंद पांड बिरसा का गुरु तुल्य था जिनके साथ वह तीन वर्षों तक रहा । उनके साथ रहकर वह गौडबेडा, बमनी और पाटपुर आदि गांव का भ्रमण किया था इस कर्म में बमनी में एक वैष्णव साधू से उनकी मुलाकात हुई । साधू उसे तीन महीने तक उपदेश देते रहा। उनके उपदेशों से प्रभावित होकर बिरसा ने मांस खाना छोड़ दिया और जनेउ धारण कर शुद्धता और धर्म परायणता का जीवन व्यतीत करने में

विशेष जोर देने लगा । वह तुलसी की पूजा करने लगा और माथे चन्दन की टीका लगाना शुरू किया उन्होंने गो-वध को भी रूकवाया । आनंद पांड के अधीन बिरसा की शिष्यत्व की अवधि 1893-94 में समाप्त हो गयी।

बिरसा का यह समय व्यक्तित्व निर्माण का था। 1894 तक में बिरसा बढ कर एक बलिष्ठ और सुन्दर युवक बन चुका था। ईसाई धर्म ने जो उसके चारों ओर एक प्रमुख शक्ति के रूप में उभर रहा था, उनके बचपन को एक विशेष सांचे में ढाला और इसके कारण ही उसे अच्छी स्कूली शिक्षा मिल पाई। बाद में वह ईसाई और वैष्णव धर्म की मिश्रित प्रभाव में आकर धार्मिक आन्दोलन की ओर प्रेरित हुआ। सरदारों के भूमि संबंधी आन्दोलन के अदम्य प्रभाव ने बिरसा को मिशनरियों से भिड़ने तथा स्कूल छोड़ने के लिए बाध्य किया। बिरसा ने सरदार आन्दोलन का अनुसरण किया और आनंद पांड का साथ छोड़ा। बाद में वह वैन

एवं भूमि संबंधी अधिकारों की मांगों को लेकर चल रहे सरदारी आन्दोलन में विशेष रूप से भाग लिया।

### **बिरसा का राजनीतिक जीवन और आदिवासी समाज के लिये दिया उनका योगदान:**

बिरसा का आन्दोलन केवल सुधारवादी सिद्धांतों के आधार पर चल रहा था। किन्तु उनके आन्दोलन में भीतर ही भीतर ईसाई मिशनरियों के विरोध का स्वर था। क्योंकि बिरसा की ईसाई धर्म विरोधी रुख पर मिशनरी के अधिकारी क्षुब्ध थे। बिरसा आन्दोलन धीरे-धीरे स्वतंत्र जन आन्दोलन के रूप में भी विकसित हो रहा था। इसमें सरदारों को शामिल होना महत्वपूर्ण था। उन्हीं के प्रभाव के कारण आन्दोलनकारी सरदार के रूप में उभरने की बिरसा की दमित आकांक्षा उभर कर सामने आने वाली है बिरसा पर सरदारों का प्रभाव था, किन्तु वह उनका प्रवक्ता न था। किंतु सरदार और बिरसा आन्दोलन दोनों की ही जड़ में भूमि संबंधी पृष्ठभूमि कायम थी।

बिरसा का उद्देश्य अपने को मुंडा राज्य का प्रधान बनना था। साथ ही धार्मिक और राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता भी हासिल करना चाहता था। जब सरदारों ने देखा कि उनके आन्दोलन के सफल होने की संभावना नहीं थी तो उन्होंने बिरसा की योजना के अनुसार काम करने लगे फल यह हुआ कि उनके बेढंगे से विचार भी बिरसा आन्दोलन को प्रभावित करने लगे। बिरसा के अनुमोदन लेकर या उनके बिना ही सरदारों ने आन्दोलन की तैयारियां शुरू कर दी और हथियार इकट्ठे किए जा रहे थे यद्यपि 24 अगस्त 1895 को विद्रोह छिड़ जाने की संभावना न थी, पर शीघ्र ही छिड़ सकता था, यह तय बात थी बिरसा को पकड़ने के लिये सरकार योजना बना रही थी। आन्दोलन छिड़ने की आशंका से बिरसा को गिरफ्तार करने के लिए सरकार की षडयंत्र चलने लगी। बिरसा पर भारतीय दण्ड प्रक्रिया की धारा 353 और 505 के अधीन गिरफ्तारी वारंट जारी किया गया। और

## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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बिरसा को गिरफ्तार कर लिया। और सजा सुना दी रांची की जेल से हजारीबाग जेल भेज दिया गया। उसने दो वर्ष की सजा भोगी। सजा खत्म होने के कुछ दिनों पूर्व उसे रांची जेल फिर भेज दिया गया ताकि उसके रिहाई के बाद उसके गतिविधि रांची की पुलिस निगाह रख सके। बिरसा को 30 नवंबर 1897 को जेल से रिहा किया गया। उसे पुलिस चलकद ले आई और चेतावनी दी गई की वह अब पुरानी हरकतें नहीं करेगा। अगले महीने 7 तारीख को डिप्टी

कमिश्नर ने चलकद में उससे मुलाकात कीं बिरसा ने वादा किया अब किसी तरह का उपद्रव नहीं करेगा। बिरसा ने अंग्रेजों से लड़ाई की और आखरी दम तक लड़ता रहा। अंततः 9 जून 1900 की सुबह 9 बजे अचानक उसकी मृत्यु जेल में हुई। कहा जाता है कि उसकी मृत्यु हैजा के प्रकोप से हुई। किन्तु संभावनायें व्यक्त की जाती रही हैं कि उसे जहर दे कर मार दिया गया। इस तरह से छोटानागपुर की धरती के इस वीर सपूत का अंतकाल हो गया।

### स्त्रोत:

जनजातीय कल्याण शोध संस्थान, झारखण्ड सरकार।

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## बिरसा मुंडा का क्रांतीकारी कार्य

प्रा. निलेश पी. चोपड़े

पदव्युत्तर भूगोल विभाग,

कै. ना. अ. देशमुख महाविद्यालय,

चांदूर बाजार

झारखंड के विर सुपुत्र बिरसा मुंडा छोटा नागपूर के इंग्रजों के खिलाफ क्रांती का शंखनाद करने वाले स्वतंत्रता सेनानी की जब भी चर्चा होती है तो सबसे पहिला नाम बिरसा मुंडा का ही आता है ।

बिरसा मुंडा झारखंड के इतिहास में एक बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण नाम है । बिरसा का जन्म खूटी जिल्लेमें उलिहात गाव में 15 नोव्हेंबर 1875 में हुआ । वह एक गरीब किसान मुंडा का बेटा था। बिरसा बड़ा होने पर उसे मामा अयूब-हातू लेके चले गये । खंडगा गाव में बिरसा एक ईसाई धर्म के संपर्क में आ गया । अयूब हाथू में मामा ने के स्कूल में उच्च प्राथमिक शिक्षा हासिल की थी, एक दिन फादर नोत्रोम ने कहा की जो भी ईसाई धर्म में रहेंगे उनकी जमीन

वापस कर दि जायेगी, इसी कारण 1886-87 में ईसाई का सरदारो से संबंध टूट गया । मिशनरीओ ने सरदारो को धोकेबाज कहना शुरू कर दिया, बिरसा ने इस बात को लेकर विद्रोह कर दिया । इस कारण बिरसा को स्कूल से निकाल दिया गया । घर की स्थिती अच्छी नहीं होने के कारण परिवार को बार - बार सहारे की जरूरत पडती थी ।

बिरसा आनंद पन्डा के संपर्क में आया गया। आसपास के गाव के लोग आनंद पन्डा से शिक्षा ग्रहण करते आते थे। बिरसा दिन भर खेतों में काम करके रात को उनके साथ भजन, किर्तन तथा प्रवचन एवं महाभारत के कृष्ण, अर्जून, भिम की कथा सुनते थे। जिसका उनके व्यक्ती जिवनपर बहुत गहरा प्रभाव पडा। 3 वर्ष

तक आनंद पन्डा के साथ रहके उन्होंने जिवन की बहुत सारी सच्चाई को जाना, आनंद पन्डा जिस जमीनदार के यहा काम करते थे वहा बिरसा हर वक्त जाया करते थे, लेकिन जमीनदार की कुरता से वह बहुत विचलीत हूये जिसका प्रभाव उनके आगामी जिवन पर पडा ।

आनंद पन्डा बिरसा के कर्तव्य निष्ठा, घोर परिक्षम, सच्चाई और इमानदारी से बहुत प्रसन्न थे, यही कारण था की उन्होंने बिरसा को कुछ मंत्र भी सिखाये, ताकी वह अपनी जनजाती के दुःख को कुछ कम कर सके । उन्होंने कुछ पारंपारिक औषधीयों का भी ज्ञान दिया जिसका लाभ बिरसा को इतना मिला की वह कुछ हि दिनो में बहुत चर्चीत हो गये । समय निकाल कर बिरसा शिकार करने निकल जाते थे । वह अच्छे निशानेबाज के साथ अच्छे बासूरीवादक भी थे । उनके महान बनने को भविष्यवाणी होनेके शिशू काल मे ही की गई थी । इस दौरान बिरसा की

मूलाकात एक वैष्णव साधू से हुई और तीन महिने तक उनसे शिक्षा प्रदान की, उन्होंने मिशन धर्म त्यागकर वैष्णव धर्म अपनाया।

बिरसा गाव के लोगों की सेवा करने लगे, उनको खाना देना, मंत्र देना, निरोगी रहने के लिये प्रेरित करना आदी उनकी दिनचर्या मे शामिल हो गये। 'सिंगबुगाड' याने ईश्वर एक है । सिर्फ उनकी पुजा होनी चाहिये, भूत प्रेत को मत मानो, किस भी पुजा मे बली मत दो । हिंसा बंद करो, शराब मत पिओ, मास मच्छलीओ से परहेज रखो, तुलसी की पुजा करो, झुट मत बोलो, आदि उपदेशो के साथ उन्होंने अपनी धर्म प्रणाली बनाई जो बिरसाई पंत याने बिरसा के धर्म के नाम से स्थापित हुआ। महामारी और चेचक के समय बिरसाने गाव - गाव जाकर लोगो की खूप सेवा की इसी कारण ग्रामीण लोंग के मन मे बिरसा के लिए बहुत भक्ती जागी और लोग बिरसा को भगवान के रुप में देखने लगे ।

बिरसा ने सरकार के विरुद्ध जब खूले आम विद्रोह किया, जमींदारों, अंग्रेजों तथा उनके अन्यायी द्वारा सताया जा रहा था। बिरसा के नेतृत्व में संघटीत होकर लड़ने का आवाहन किया बाहरी लोगों के विरुद्ध शस्त्रास्त्र प्रतीरोध और संस्कृति को तर्क जीवन देने की दोहरी प्रक्रिया घुलमिल गई और आगे चलकर उसकी परिनीति मुण्डाओं की 19 वीं शताब्दी की अंतिम विद्रोह उलगुलान में हुई जिसका नेतृत्व बिरसा मुंडा ने किया।

बिरसा और उनकी अन्यायी की गतिविधि देखकर अंग्रेज बोखला गये। किसी भी प्रकार अंग्रेज सरकार इस आंदोलन को दबा देना चाहती थी। जिल्हा के अधीक्षक 28 अगस्त 1895 को स्वयं बिरसा के गांव चलकर गये और बिरसा को सोये हुये गिरफ्तार करके रांची लाया। बिरसा को रांची जेल में रखा गया नवंबर 1895 को बिरसा तथा उनके पंधरा अन्यायी को सजा सुनाई गई। बिरसा को 2 वर्ष की कड़ी

सजा तथा 50 रुपये जर्मना हुआ। 1897 के उत्तरार्ध में महाराणी व्हिक्टोरिया के हिरक जयंती के अवसर पर बिरसा मुंडा सहित अनेक कैदीयों की रिहा कर दिया गया।

उनका विद्रोह 25 दिसंबर 1999 में शुरू हुआ। बिरसा के गतिविधि के कारण रांची के आयुक्त ने छोटी कमान और रांची में बड़ी घेराबंदी की। बिरसा और उनकी अन्यायी को पकड़ने के लिये पोलीस ने अपना नियंत्रण केंद्र वन्दगांव में रखा। जहां के जमींदार जगमोहन सिंग थे। समय के गतिविधियोंको देखते हुये बिरसा ने अपनी नीति में बदलाव करके तिरधनुष्य तथा गोलाबारूद से मूकाबला चलता रहा। अंत में बिरसा के अन्याई की पराजय हुई लगभग 300 अनुयायी पकड़े गये। किंतु बिरसा मुंडा को पकड़ा नहीं जा सका। बिरसा चक्रधर पूर के जंगल में छुपे। 500 रु के इनाम के लालच में बिरसा को 3 मार्च 1900 में पकड़कर रांची लाया गया यह उनकी जिवन की अंतिम यात्रा सिद्ध हुई।

## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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बिरसा को रांची जहल भेजा गया रांची जहल के अपने प्रवास में बिरसामूंड़ा की मृत्यु 9 जून 1900 में प्रातः 8 बजे हुई । माना जाता है की अंग्रेजों ने उन्हें जहर देखकर मार डाला ।

बिरसा हमेशा यह प्रचार करते रहे की अबुवा राज आना महाराणी राज समाप्त हुआ, आदिवासी के खोये हुई, अधिकार वापस दिलाकर तथा जड से मुक्त कराने के लिये

आज भी बिरसा को याद किया जाता है। वे आज भी आदिवासी के नये प्रेरणा की गुंज मानी जाते हैं । सरकारने बिरसा जयंती झारखंड राज्य स्थापना दिवस मनाकर उन्हें सन्मानित किया है । ऐसे विरपूत्र सपूत बार-बार नहीं पैदा होते हमें उनपर गर्व है । उन्होके स्मृती को हर झारखंडी तथा हर भारतीय नमन करते हैं ।

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## भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में बिरसा मुंडा का योगदान

डा. विभा प्र. देशपांडे

कला व विज्ञान महाविद्यालय

कुर्छा

भारत भूमि पर कई ऐसे नायक पैदा हुए जिनका नाम इतिहास के पन्नों पर स्वर्णिम अक्षरों में लिखा गया है, उन्हीं में से एक है बिरसा मुंडा। कहा जाता है की एक छोटी सी आवाज भी दमदार बन सकती है बस उसके बोलने में दम होना चाहिए। उसका जीता जागता उदाहरण माने बिरसा मुंडा जिन्होंने भारत के सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक व स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

बिरसा मुंडा का जन्म 15 नवम्बर 1875 को वर्तमान झारखंड राज्य के रांची जिले में उलिहाती गांव में हुआ था। उनकी माता का नाम करमी हातू और पिता का नाम सुगना था। यह समय अंग्रेजी शासन

का था। आदिवासी अपने इलाके में किसी का भी हस्तक्षेप सहन नहीं कर सकते थे। इतिहास के पन्नों पर नजर डालें तो अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध छिड़े संग्राम में आदिवासी जनजातियों के संग्राम को हमेशा ही महत्वपूर्ण माना गया है।

यह संग्राम किसी राजनीतिक पदो को प्राप्त करने के लिए नहीं था और ना ही किसी व्यक्तिगत स्वार्थ के लिये था बल्कि अपने देश, अपनी धरती माता की सम्प्रभुता के लिये यह महान संग्राम था। यह संग्राम अतुलनीय था। विविध रूपों में कम - अधिक प्रमाण में यह संग्राम वर्तमान में भी जारी हैं।

इसी प्रकार का एक स्वतंत्रता संग्राम हुआ - बिरसा मुंडा के नेतृत्व में चलने वाला उलगुलान। यह एक ऐसा संग्राम था जिसमें सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक राजनीति के सभी सूत्र आपस में उलझे हुए थे। बिरसा मुंडा के महान आंदोलन पर जो पुस्तक प्रकाशित हुई थी वह अंग्रेजी में थी फिर भी इसका गहरा प्रभाव सिर्फ आदिवासी आंदोलन झारखंड के साहित्य व समाज पर ही नहीं बल्कि सम्पूर्ण ऐतिहासिक लेखन के क्षेत्र पर पड़ा और बिरसा मुंडा के रूप में एक राष्ट्रीय नेतृत्व उभरकर सामने आए। कम - अधिक प्रमाण में आदिवासी बिरसा का आंदोलन अभी भी जारी हैं और उसकी अनिवार्यता व प्रासंगिकता आज भी हैं। आदिवासीयो को लगातार जल जंगल जमीन से और प्राकृतिक संसाधनों से बेदखल किया जाता रहा है और वो निरंतर इसके खिलाफ आवाज उठाते रहे हैं। 1895 में बिरसा मुंडा ने अंग्रेजों द्वारा लागू की गई जमीनदारी प्रथा और राजस्व व्यवस्था के विरुद्ध लड़ाई

के साथ ही जल जंगल जमीन की जंग भी जारी की व सूदखोर महाजनो के खिलाफ मैदाने जंग का एलान किया क्योंकि महाजन (दिकू) कर्ज के बदले उनके जमीन पर कब्जा कर लेते थे स इसलिए यह विद्रोह नहीं बल्कि आदिवासियों की संस्कृति अस्मिता स्वायत्तता निष्कपटता को बचाने के लिए आंदोलन था। सुप्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार तथा लेखिका रमणिका गुप्ता ने आदिवासियों पर लिखा ग्रंथ आदिवासी अस्मिता का संकट इसमें उन्होंने कहा है कि- रेलों के विस्तार के लिए जब अंग्रेजों ने मानभूम दामिन -ई- कोह (संथाल परगना) इस इलाके के जंगलों को काटना शुरू किया तब बहुत बड़ी संख्या में आदिवासी विस्थापित होने लगे साथ ही वो जिस जमीन पर खेती करते थे उस जमीन को जमीनदारों और दलालों ने आपस में बांटकर राजस्व की नयी व्यवस्था लागू कर दी। इन सब अत्याचारों के खिलाफ आदिवासी संगठित होकर आंदोलन करने के लिए

मजबूर हुए और उन्होंने विद्रोह करना प्रारंभ किया

बिरसा मुंडा जो कि बचपन से ही कुशाग्र बुद्धी के थे साथ ही सामाजिक परिस्थिती से अनभिज्ञ नहीं थे। उनके पिताजी चाहते थे कि बेटा अच्छा पढ़े इस उद्देश्य से उन्होंने मिशनरी स्कूल में उनका दाखला करवाया लेकिन वहा ईसाई धर्म का पाठ पढ़ाया जाता था जिसके खिलाफ उन्होंने मत व्यक्त करना प्रारंभ किया। स्कूल छोड़कर अपने आपको सामाजिक कार्यो हेतु झोक दिया। जैसे की कहा जाता है पूत के पांव पालने में वाली कहावत बिरसा के बारे में सही साबित हुई। इसके बाद बिरसा ने पिछे मुड़कर नहीं देखा। लगभग 1890 के करीब बिरसा वैष्णव धर्म की ओर अग्रसित हुए और अपने समाज बांधव को अंधश्रद्धा अंधभक्ति से बाहर निकालने का प्रयत्न करने लगे। आदिवासी बांधव किसी भी महामारी को देवी का प्रकोप मानते थे। ऐसे में उनको समझाने और

महामारी से बचने के उपाय बताते। इससे किस प्रकार से लड़ा जाय यह समझाते। इस प्रकार अपने समुदाय को हर तरह से जागृत करने का वे प्रयत्न करने लगे। उनके भोजन की व्यवस्था तन ढाकने के लिए कपड़े बढ़ती हुई गरीबी साथ ही इंडियन फारेस्ट एक्ट 1882 के कारण छीन लिये गये जंगल इन सब के खिलाफ बिरसा ने हथियार उठाए और उलगुलान प्रारंभ हो गया। किंतु अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ जंग करना इतना आसान काम नहीं था। क्योंकि संख्या और संसाधन दोनों ही कम होने के कारण बिरसा ने छापामार लड़ाई का सहारा लिया। पूरे आसपास के इलाके में उनके नाम से पुलिस आतंकित हो उठी उस जमाने में अंग्रेजों ने बिरसा के नाम 500 रु. का इनाम रखा। आखिर अंग्रेजों और बिरसा के बीच अंतिम और निर्णायक जंग 1900 में टूम्बरी (राची) के पहाड़ी में हुई। काफी संख्या में आदिवासी बिरसा के नेतृत्व में उतरे एवं संघर्ष जारी रहा परंतु इनके पास तीर कमान और

अंग्रेजों के पास तोप और बंदूक। आखिर आदिवासी बांधव कहा तक टिक पाते अंग्रेजों ने काफी संख्या में आदिवासी बांधवों को बेरहमी से मारा। परिणामस्वरूप अंग्रेज जीत तो गये परंतु बिरसा को ना पकड़ पाये। लेकिन किसी ने सच ही कहा है घर का भेदी लंका ढाहे। इसी उक्ति के स्वरूप बिरसा के जाति के लोगों ने ही 500 रु. के लिए उन्हें गिरफ्तार करवा दिया।

केवल 25 साल की उम्र में बिहार झारखंड ओडिशा में जननायक के रूप में अपनी पहचान स्थापित की। आज भी आदिवासी जनता बिरसा मुंडा को भगवान के रूप में पूजती हैं। बिरसा ने आदिवासी समाज की दिशा बदलकर नवीन सामाजिक और राजनीतिक युग का सूत्रपात किया। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के मुख्य कड़ी के रूप में बिरसा का नाम हमेशा अमर रहेगा।

### संदर्भ:

- 1 ललित गर्ग - लेख।

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## बिरसा मुंडा की जीवनी: एकपरिचय

प्रशांतकुमार

विद्यार्थी

बीएनएमयू मधेपुरा

झारखंड राज्य में पाई जानेवाली मुंडा जनजातियों में 'बिरसा भगवान' के नाम से लोकप्रिय बिरसा मुंडा का जन्म 15 नवम्बर 1875 ई० को राँची जिले के उलिहातू नामक स्थान पर हुआ था। इसलिए मुंडा जनजाति की परंपरा के अनुसार उनका नाम 'बिरसा' रखा गया। उनके पिता सगुना मुंडा एक खेतिहर मजदूर थे। उनके पास रहने के लिए कोई सुरक्षित स्थान नहीं था। वे बाँस से बनी एक छोटी सी झोपड़ी में अपने परिवार के साथ जीवन व्यतीत करते थे।

बिरसा मुंडा के जन्म के पश्चात ही मुंडा जनजातियों और उनके काश्तकारों में

झगडा हो गया जिसमें उनके पिता सगुना मुंडा भी शामिल थे। इसकारण उसे अपने परिवार सहित चलकाद में आकर रहना पड़ा। उनका जन्मोत्सव भी चलकाद में ही मनाया गया। वे बचपन से ही बड़े प्रतिभाशाली थे। वे अन्य मुंडा बच्चों की तरह ही अपने साथियों के साथ मिट्टी और रेत में खेला करते थे। जैसे-जैसे वे बड़े होते गए उनका शरीर मजबूत और सुडौल होता चला गया। बड़ा होने के साथ ही साथियों के साथ वे जंगल में भेड़-बकरीयाँ चराने जाने लगे। जंगल में ही वे बाँसुरी बजाया करते थे

जिनकी तान सुनकर लोग उनके पास आकर इकट्ठा हो जाते थे।

उनका परिवार अत्यन्त ही गरीबी की दौड़ से गुजर रहा था। उनके बड़े भाई कोमता मुंडा मात्र दस वर्ष की उम्र में ही कुंडी बारतोली के एक मुंडा के यहाँ नौकरी करने लगे थे। कुछ समय पश्चात् ही उन्होंने वहीं अपना विवाह भी कर लिया। लगभग आठ वर्ष तक कुंडी बारतोली में रहने के बाद कोमता मुंडा अपने माता-पिता और भाई के साथ चलकाद आ गए। गरीबी के कारण उनके माता-पिता ने बिरसा को उनके मामा के गाँव भेज दिया। वहीं पास के गाँव अमूगनू में एक वर्ष तक शिक्षा प्राप्त की। जयपाल नाग उस स्कूल के संचालक थे।

सन् 1893-1894 में सिंहभूम, मानभूम, पालामऊ और इस तरह के अन्य क्षेत्रों में खाली पड़ी भूमि को सरकार ने भारतीय वन अधिनियम के तहत आरक्षित वन क्षेत्र घोषित कर दिया। इसके अंतर्गत वन प्रवास कार्यक्रम चलाए गए और

वनवासी लोगों के अधिकारों का निर्धारण करने के लिए कानून बनाए गए। जंगल के गाँवों को सुविधा प्रदान करने के लिए उसे छोटे छोटे खंडों में विभाजित कर उनमें आस-पास की परती और उपजाऊ भूमि को भी शामिल किया गया। इन खंडों के बाहर आरक्षित वन था। जिसे भारतीय वन अधिनियम-7 के नियम लागू होते थे लेकिन इन अधिनियम के अंतर्गत वनवासियों को प्राप्त अधिकार को बहुत कम कर दिया गया था। इसके विरोध में वनवासियों ने एक याचिका दायर की लेकिन सरकार ने उस पर कोई ध्यान नहीं दिया। बिरसा मुंडा ने सिरगिदा और चाईबासा के कुछ वनवासी किसानों को साथ लेकर स्थानीय अधिकारी के अत्याचारों के विरुद्ध याचिका दायर की लेकिन इसका कुछ भी परिणाम नहीं निकला।

बिरसा के विचारों का गहरा प्रभाव वनवासियों पर पड़ा और अधिकारियों के विरुद्ध एक बड़ा संगठन बन गया। उनकी

बढ़ती लोकप्रियता को देखकर अंग्रेजी मिशनरी चिंतीत हो उठे, उन्हें यह डर सताने लगा कि बिरसा उनके लिए खतरे की घंटी बन सकता है। अतः उन्हें गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। उनकी गिरफ्तारी के विरोध में वनवासियों ने हजारों की संख्या में एकत्रित होकर पुलिस थाने का घेराव किया और उन्हें छोड़ने की माँग की। सरकार ने मुडाओं पर भी राजद्रोह का आरोप लगाकर उन पर मुकदमा चला दिया। बिरसा को दो वर्ष की सजा सुनाई गई और उन्हें हजारीबाग की जेल में भेज दिया गया। बिरसा का अपराध यह था कि उन्होंने आदिवासियों के अधिकार के लिए लड़ने के लिए संगठित किया था। जेल जाने के बाद बिरसा के मन में अंग्रेजों के प्रतिघृणा और बढ़ गयी।

दो वर्ष की सजा पूरी करने के बाद उसे रिहा कर दिया गया। उनकी मुक्ति का समाचार पाकर हजारों की संख्या में आदिवासी उनके पास आए। बिरसा ने अनेकों गुप्त सभाएँ की और अंग्रेजी शासन

के विरुद्ध संघर्ष के लिए उन्हें संगठित अपने साथियों को उन्होंने शस्त्र संग्रह करने, तीर कमान बनाने और कुल्हाड़ी की धार तेज करने जैसे कार्यों लगाकर उन्हें सशस्त्र क्रांति को 'उनगुलान क्रांति' का नाम दिया।

सन् 1899 ई० में उनगुलान क्रांति का श्री गणेश किया गया। बिरसा के नेतृत्व में क्रांतिकारियों ने राँची से चाईबासा तक की पुलिस चौकियों को घेर लिया गया और ईसाई मिशनरियों तथा अंग्रेज अधिकारियों पर तीरों की बौछार शुरू कर दी। सरवदा ईसाई मिशन का गोदाम जला दिया गया। राँची में कईदिनों तक कर्फ्यू जैसी स्थिती बनी रही। घबराकर अंग्रेजों ने हजारीबाग तथा कलकत्ता से सेना बुलवा लिया।

अब बिरसा के नेतृत्व में वनवासियों ने अंग्रेजों से सीधी लड़ाई छेड़ दी। अंग्रेजों के पास बंदूक, बम आदि आधुनिक हथियार थे जबकि क्रांतिकारियों के पास साधारण हथियार तीर कमान थे। बिरसा और उनके अनुयायियों ने जान की बाजी लगाकर

अंग्रेजी सेना का मुकाबला किया। अंत में बिरसा के लगभग चार सौ अनुयायी मारे गए और लगभग इतने ही गिरफ्तार कर लिये गये। बिरसा को भी गिरफ्तार करने का प्रयास किया गया लेकिन वे हाथ नहीं आए। इस घटना के पश्चात 3 जनवरी 1900 को अंग्रेजों ने मौका पाकर बिरसा को चक्रधरपुर के जंगल से गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। उन्हें जंजीरों में जकड़कर राँची जेल भेज दिया गया, जहाँ उन्हें कठोर यातनाएँ दी गईं। बिरसा हँसते हँसते सब कुछ सहते गए। 9 जून 1900 को हैजा के कारण उनका देहावसान हो गया। कुछ लोगों का मानना है कि उन्हें जहर देकर मार दिया गया। वास्तविकता जो भी हो इतना तो निश्चित रूप से कहा जा सकता है कि बिरसा ने स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन को एक नई दिशा देकर भारतीयों विशेषकर आदिवासियों में स्वदेश प्रेम की भावना जागृत की।

आज भी झारखंड, उड़ीसा, बिहार, पश्चिम बंगाल और मध्य प्रदेश के मुंडा

आदिवासी बिरसा को भगवान के रूप में याद करते हैं और उन्हें अपना युवा नेता मानते हैं। ऐसे में कवि भुजंग मेश्राम की पंक्तियाँ याद आती हैं:-

“बिरसा तुम्हें कहीं से भी आना होगा  
घास काटती दरातीहो या लकड़ी  
काटती कुल्हाड़ी  
यहाँ वहाँ से, पूरब-पश्चिम, उत्तर-  
दक्षिण से

कहीं से भी आ मेरे बिरसा  
खेतों की बयार बनकर,  
लोग तेरी बाट जोहते”

बिरसा मुंडा की गणना महान देशभक्तों में की जाती है। उन्होंने आदिवासियों को संगठित कर उन्हें अंग्रेजी शासन के विरुद्ध संघर्ष करने के लिए तैयार किया। इसके अतिरिक्त उन्होंने भारतीय संस्कृति की रक्षा करने के लिए धर्मान्तरण करने वाले ईसाई मिशनरियों का खुलकर विरोध भी किया।

## बिरसा मुंडा का जीवन और भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में उनका योगदान

सौरभ मौर्या

कनिष्ठ शोध अध्येता, (पी-एच0 डी0, समाजशास्त्र),

डॉ राममनोहर लोहिया अवध विश्वविद्यालय,

अयोध्या, उत्तर प्रदेश, भारत

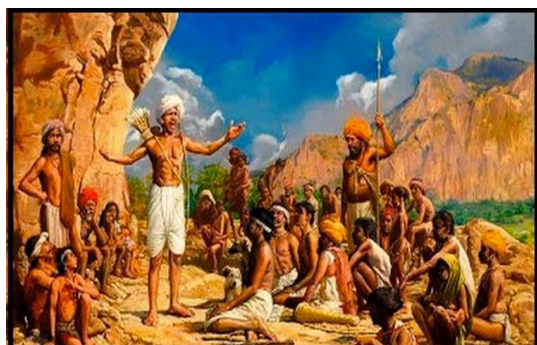
“मैं केवल देह नहीं,  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हूँ  
पुश्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं,  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से  
बेदखल नहीं कर सकता  
उलगुलान! उलगुलान! उलगुलान!!!”

### प्रस्तावना –

बिरसा का आंदोलन आदिवासी समाज को सुधारने का आंदोलन था। उन्होंने मुंडाओं से कहा किया कि वे शराब पीना छोड़ दें, गाँवों को साफ रखें और डायन व जादू-टोने में विश्वास न करें। यहाँ ध्यान देने वाली बात यह है कि बिरसा ने मिशनरियों और हिंदू जमींदारों का भी लगातार विरोध किया। वह उन्हें बाहर का मानते थे जो मुंडा जीवन शैली को नष्ट कर रहे थे। 1895 में बिरसा ने अपने अनुयायियों से आवाहन किया कि वे अपने

गौरवपूर्ण अतीत को पुनर्जीवित करने के लिए संकल्प लें। वह अतीत के एक ऐसे स्वर्ण युग-सतयुग की चर्चा करते थे जब मुंडा लोग अच्छा जीवन जीते थे, तटबंध बनाते थे, कुदरती झरनों को नियंत्रित करते थे, पेड़ और बाग लगाते थे, पेट पालने के लिए खेती करते थे। उस काल्पनिक युग में मुंडा अपने बिरादरों और रिश्तेदारों का खून नहीं बहाते थे। वे ईमानदारी से जीते थे। बिरसा चाहते थे कि लोग एक बार फिर अपनी जमीन पर खेती

करें, एक जगह टिक कर रहें और अपने खेतों में काम करें।



बिरसा के जीवन में एक नया मोड़ आया। उनका स्वामी आनन्द पाण्डे से सम्पर्क हो गया और उन्हें हिन्दू धर्म तथा महाभारत के पात्रों का परिचय मिला। यह कहा जाता है कि 1895 में कुछ ऐसी आलौकिक घटनाएँ घटीं जिनके कारण लोग बिरसा को भगवान का अवतार मानने लगे। लोगों में यह विश्वास दृढ़ हो गया कि बिरसा के स्पर्श मात्र से ही रोग दूर हो जाते हैं। जन-सामान्य का बिरसा में काफी दृढ़ विश्वास हो चुका था, इससे बिरसा को अपने प्रभाव में वृद्धि करने में मदद मिली। लोग उनकी बातें सुनने के लिए बड़ी संख्या में एकत्र होने लगे। बिरसा ने पुराने अंधविश्वासों का खंडन किया। लोगों को हिंसा और मादक पदार्थों से

दूर रहने की सलाह दी। उनकी बातों का प्रभाव यह पड़ा कि ईसाई धर्म स्वीकार करने वालों की संख्या तेजी से घटने लगी और जो मुंडा ईसाई बन गये थे, वे फिर से अपने पुराने धर्म में लौटने लगे।

### आदिवासियों के धरती पिता-

1894 में बारिश न होने से छोटा नागपुर में भयंकर अकाल और महामारी फैली हुई थी। बिरसा ने पूरे समर्पण से अपने लोगों की सेवा की। उन्होंने लोगों को अन्धविश्वास से बाहर निकलकर बिमारियों का इलाज करने के प्रति जागरूक किया। सभी आदिवासियों के लिए वे धरती पिता हो गये।

### भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में योगदान -

अब तक बिरसा का आन्दोलन केवल सुधारवादी सिद्धांतों के आधार पर चल रहा था, किन्तु उनके आन्दोलन में भीतर ही भीतर ईसाई मिशनरियों के विरुद्ध विरोध का स्वर था। क्योंकि बिरसा की ईसाई धर्म विरोधी रुख पर मिशनरी के अधिकारी क्षुब्ध थे। बिरसा आन्दोलन धीरे-धीरे स्वतंत्र जन आन्दोलन के रूप में भी विकसित हो रहा था।

इसमें सरदारों का शामिल होना महत्वपूर्ण था।

अंग्रेजों ने 1882 इंडियन फारेस्ट एक्ट' पारित कर आदिवासियों को जंगल के अधिकार से वंचित कर दिया। अंग्रेजों ने ज़मींदारी व्यवस्था लागू कर आदिवासियों के वो गाँव जहाँ वे सामूहिक खेती करते थे, ज़मींदारों और दलालों में बाँटकर राजस्व की नयी व्यवस्था लागू कर दी और फिर शुरू हुआ अंग्रेजों, ज़मींदार व महाजनों द्वारा भोले-भाले आदिवासियों का शोषण। इस शोषण के खिलाफ विद्रोह की चिंगारी फूँकी बिरसा मुंडा ने। अपने लोगों को गुलामी से आजादी दिलाने के लिए बिरसा ने जल-जंगल-ज़मीन पर दावेदारी की अलख जगाई। "हमारा देश हमारा राज।" 1895 में बिरसा ने अंग्रेजों की लागू की गयी ज़मींदारी प्रथा और राजस्व व्यवस्था के खिलाफ लड़ाई के साथ-साथ जंगल-ज़मीन की लड़ाई छेड़ी। यह सिर्फ कोई बगावत नहीं थी। बल्कि यह तो आदिवासी स्वाभिमान, स्वतन्त्रता और संस्कृति को बचाने का संग्राम था। देखते-ही-देखते सभी

आदिवासी जंगल पर दावेदारी के लिए इकट्ठे हो गये। अंग्रेजी सरकार के पांव उखड़ने लगे और भ्रष्ट ज़मींदार व पूंजीवादी बिरसा के नाम से भी कांपते थे।



अंग्रेजी सरकार ने बिरसा के उलगुलान को दबाने की हर संभव कोशिश की लेकिन आदिवासियों के गुरिल्ला युद्ध के आगे उन्हें असफलता ही मिली। 1897 से 1900 के बीच आदिवासियों और अंग्रेजों के बीच कई लड़ाईयां हुईं, पर हर बार अंग्रेजी सरकार ने मुंह की खाई।

### अंतिम यात्रा

जिस बिरसा को अंग्रेजों की तोप और बंदूकों की ताकत नहीं पकड़ पायी उसके बंदी बनने का कारण अपने ही लोगों का धोखा बनी। जब अंग्रेजी सरकार ने बिरसा को पकड़वाने के लिए 500 रुपये की धनराशी के

इनाम की घोषणा की तो किसी अपने ही व्यक्ति ने बिरसा के ठिकाने का पता अंग्रेजों तक पहुंचाया। जनवरी 1900 में उलिहातू के नजदीक डोमबाड़ी पहाड़ी पर बिरसा अपनी जनसभा को सम्बोधित कर रहे थे तभी अंग्रेज सिपाहियों ने चारो तरफ से घेर लिया। अंग्रेजों और आदिवासियों के बीच लड़ाई हुई। औरतें और बच्चों समेत बहुत से लोग मारे गये। अन्त में बिरसा भी 3 फरवरी 1900 को चक्रधरपुर में गिरफ्तार कर लिये गये। अदालत में बिरसा पर झूठा मुकदमा चला और उसके बाद उन्हें जेल में डाल दिया गया। वहां उन्हें अंग्रेजों ने धीमा जहर दिया जिससे 9 जून 1900 को रांची के कारागार में बिरसा की मृत्यु हो गई। अंग्रेजों ने यह संदेश देने की कोशिश की उनकी मृत्यु स्वाभाविक हुई, क्योंकि बिरसा की मौत की बजाय हत्या की खबर फैलती तो आदिवासियों के गुस्से को रोक पाना असंभव हो जाता।

### निष्कर्ष –

बिरसा ने अपने छोटे से जीवन में अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ आदिवासियों को एकत्रित

कर विद्रोह का सूत्र तैयार कर लिया और उन्हें आवाज उठाने की राजनीति सिखाई। बिरसा हमेशा अपनी संस्कृति और धर्म को बचाना और बरकरार रखना चाहते थे। उन्होंने मुंडा परंपरा और सामाजिक संरचना को नया जीवन दिया। दरअसल यह स्थानीयता की सुरक्षा की राजनीतिक लड़ाई का एक रूप था। इसीलिए बिरसा मुंडा को न केवल झारखंड में बल्कि समाज और राष्ट्र के नायक के रूप में देखा जाता है। बिरसा मुंडा वास्तव में भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की पहली लड़ाई के महानायक थे। आज भी बिहार, उड़ीसा, झारखंड, छत्तीसगढ़ और पश्चिम बंगाल के आदिवासी इलाकों में बिरसा मुंडा को भगवान की तरह पूजा जाता है। बिरसा मुंडा की समाधि राँची में कोकर के निकट डिस्टिलरी पुल के पास स्थित है। वहीं उनकी मूर्ति भी लगी है। उनकी स्मृति में राँची में बिरसा मुंडा केन्द्रीय कारागार तथा बिरसा मुंडा हवाई-अड्डा भी है। बिरसा मुंडाजी के जाने के इतने सालों बाद आज भी उनका संग्राम जारी है। बहुत से आदिवासी संगठन हैं जो जंगल



पर दावेदारी के लिए आज भी संघर्ष कर रहे जारी रखा है। इन सभी के प्रेरणास्रोत हैं बिरसा हैं। इन सभी ने मिलकर बिरसा का उलगुलान मुंडा।

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## बिरसा मुण्डा का मानवता के लिए संदेश

रामसिया चर्मकार

रिसर्च स्कालर

राजनीति विज्ञान

अवधेश प्रताप सिंह विवि रीवा (म.प्र.)

### सामाजिक व्यवस्था और बिरसा मुण्डा-

भारत में अंग्रेजों व मुगलों से आने से पहले ही व्यवस्था ने यहां के लोगों को 6743 जातियों में विभाजित कर दिये। इतना ही नहीं इन्हें सछूत और अछूत भी बना कर रखे थे और वही स्थिति बनी हुई है। उस समय आदिवासियों का जीवन नरकीय रहा। आदिवासी अपनी आने वाली पीढ़ी को समस्त गुलामियों से आजाद कराना चाहते थे। बिरसा मुण्डा के पिताजी तोड़ मेहनत करते ताकि बिरसा को पढ़ा लिखा कर एक योग्य व्यक्ति बना सकें। आदिवासी गांवों के हालात अच्छे नहीं थे। प्रत्येक गांवों पर सवर्णों और ईसाई मिशनरियों की गिद्ध दृष्टि थी। सवर्ण नहीं चाहते थे कि आदिवासी पढ़ना-लिखना सीखें और सभ्य समाज का अंग बनकर सवर्णों की बराबरी करें। यदि

आदिवासी पढ़-लिख गये जो उनकी चाकरी और करेगा। सवर्णों को आदिवासियों से काम कराने और उन्हें अपना गुलाम बनाकर रखने की आदत पड़ गई थी। सवर्ण चाहते थे कि उनके हिस्से का सारा काम आदिवासी स्त्री-पुरुष करें तथा वे अपनी व आदिवासियों के स्त्रियों के साथ भी भोग करें। सवर्ण यह भूल चुके थे कि आदिवासी भी इंसान होते हैं। सवर्णों ने शूद्रों व आदिवासियों के लिए शिक्षा के द्वार बंद कर दिए थे। शिक्षा के बिना कहां किसी को अच्छे-बुरे का ज्ञान रहता है। इस बात को सवर्ण भ्रांतिभांति जानते थे। इसलिये वे शूद्रों व आदिवासियों को शिक्षा से सदैव वंचित रखना चाहते थे।

उस दौर में जो मानसिकता व हालात थे वह आज भी है। सामाजिक

व्यवस्था व मानसिक हालात के विषय में जागरण समाचार पत्र में रोहित कौशिक लिखते हैं कि शूद्रों का विकास आज समाज के कथित उच्च वर्णों की आंख में चुभता है। इनके साथ अत्याचार की घटनाओं के मूल में जातियों द्वारा अपने आपको श्रेष्ठ मानने और दलितों कमतर सिद्ध करने का भाव ज्यादा है। उनका इस तरह से व्यवहार करना अन्यायपूर्ण ही है। हमारे देश में अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जातियों में चेतना बढ़ने के साथ ही इन पर अत्याचार के मामले भी बढ़े हैं। इनमें दबंगई का भाव कायम है। उनका श्रेष्ठताबोध रूप ले चुका है और बार बार समाज के खोखले आदर्शवाद की पोल खोल रहा है। दिखाने का आलम यह है कि मुख्यधारा के राजनेता खुद को इनका सबसे बड़ा हितैषी होने का दम भरते हैं। किन्तु जब इन पर ज्यादाती होती है तो कोई भी नेता एक शब्द भी बोलने के लिए तैयार नहीं होता है। ऐसे नेताओं के मन में भय घर कर गया है

कि यदि वे इस विषय में वह कुछ भी बोलता है तो वह सवर्णों की नजरों में आ जाएगा जो कि उसके और उसकी राजनीतिक जीवन पर विपरीत प्रभाव पड़ सकता है। वे डा. भीमराव अम्बेडकर के विचारों को व्यक्त करते हुए आगे लिखते हैं कि अम्बेडकर ने इस सत्य को बहुत पहले ही समझ लिया था कि जब तक दलित वर्ग (अनुसूचित जाति/अनुसूचित जनजाति) अपनी शक्ति को पहचान कर सत्ता का भागीदार नहीं बनेगा उसकी उपेक्षा होती रहेगी। लेकिन सवाल यह है कि क्या इस दौर में सत्ता का भागीदार बने दलित नेताओं को अम्बेडकर के विचारों और आदर्शों की कोई फिक्र है

### बिरसा मुण्डा में साहस का सृजन-

सामाजिक व्यवस्था व सवर्णों की मानसिकता को जानकर बिरसा मुण्डा को बहुत आघात पहुंचा। इससे बिरसा मुण्डा के विचारों में मूलभूत परिवर्तन होने के साथ ही उसमें मानव सेवा करने व अपने समुदाय का उद्धार करने का निश्चय

किया। सामाजिक व्यवस्था ने बिरसा मुण्डा के जन्म के पूर्व ही आदिवासी समाज को गर्त में पहुँचा दिया था। इतना ही नहीं जमींदारों और साहूकारों ने आदिवासियों पर ऐसे-ऐसे जुल्म किए कि वे त्राहि-त्राहि कर उठे। जमींदार खेतों में उनसे काम करवाते और उसके एवज में बहुत ही कम अनाज देते थे जिसमें उनका गुजारा भी नहीं हो पाता था। मिशनरियों उनका प्राकृतिक धर्म परिवर्तन कर उन्हें अपना अनुयायी बनाने पर तुले थे। मिशनरियों का पोल खुल गया और मुण्डा सरदारों ने ईसाई मिशनरियों के साथ आंदोलन शुरू कर दिया। इसके बाद वे मुण्डा आदिवासियों पर अनेक प्रकार के अत्याचार करने लगे और उन्हें बेईमान व झूठा बताकर जलील करते। यह सुनकर 16 वर्षीय बिरसा मुण्डा को अपनी जाति का अपमान सहन न हुआ। उनका स्वाभिमान जाग उठा। बिरसा मुण्डा ने कहा कि मुण्डा बेईमान नहीं हैं। बेईमान तुम हो। तुम लुटेरे हो धोखेवाज हो। तुम

हमारा धर्म बदलने आए हों कहते हो तुम हमारी जमीन दिला दोगें। पर हम यह जान गए हैं कि तुम हमारी जमीन नहीं दिला सकते हो क्योंकि सूदखोरो और जमींदारों से मिले हुए हो। इसके बाद बिरसा मुण्डा अपनी जाति का उद्धार करने का संकल्प लिया और उसके लिए तैयारी शुरू कर दी। संघर्ष के लिए अपने जाति के लोगों को करो या मरो की शैली में काम करने के लिए तैयार करना।

## बिरसा मुण्डा का स्वतंत्रता के लिए आन्दोलन-

बिरसा मुण्डा का आन्दोलन मुख्य रूप से अपने समुदाय को विभिन्न प्रकार की गुलामी से आजादी दिलाने की रही है। आदिवासी समाज को स्वतंत्र कराना बिरसा मुण्डा ने अपने जीवन का उद्देश्य बना लिया था। आदिवासी समाज तीन प्रकार से गुलाम किये गये थे। पहला- आदिवासी समाज को सम्पूर्ण रूप से सवर्णों ने अपने अधीन कर रखा था। दूसरा- ईसाई मिशनरियों ने जमींदारों और

साहूकारों से आजादी दिलाने के नाम पर धर्म परिवर्तन का खेल। और तीसरा- अंग्रेजों के काले कानून। बिरसा मुण्डा को आदिवासियों को इन तीनों प्रकार की गुलामी से आजादी दिलानी थी। 24 दिसम्बर 1899 को बिरसा मुण्डा ने अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध आन्दोलन की शुरुआत कर दी। उन्होंने ब्रिटिश सरकार के विरुद्ध रानी का शासन खत्म करो और हमारा साम्राज्य स्थापित करो का नारा बुलंद किया। इस आन्दोलन में हजारों आदिवासी इसमें अपनी जान गंवा चुके हैं। इन संघर्षों का नतीजा यह निकला कि आदिवासियों का स्वाभिमान व अधिकारों के लिए लड़ने के आदर्श जीवित रहे। बिरसा के लिए एक बहुत बड़ी चुनौती रही। जिसे बिरसा मुण्डा ने बखूबी अंजाम तक पहुँचाया। आज भी आदिवासी अपने अधिकारों के लिए संघर्ष कर रहे हैं। अपनी मांगों के लिए लगातार संवैधानिक रूप से लड़ाई लड़ रहे हैं। इन संघर्षों में एक नारा बुलंद किया जा रहा है कि हम

आदिवासी भारत के मूलनिवासी हैं। आवाज-ए-मूलनिवासी किताब की लेखिका आदिवासी लड़की लिखती हैं मुझे गर्व है कि मैं आदिवासी हूँ क्योंकि मैं इस धरती की मूलनिवासी हूँ।

### बिरसा मुण्डा के जीवन का अंतः

सामाजिक चेतना और अपने अधिकारों को हासिल करने के लिए जो जिज्ञासा उनमें और उन्होंने अपने लोगों में जाग्रित कि उससे सवर्णों एवं जमींदारों और यहां तक कि अंग्रेजों में भी भय उत्पन्न हो जाने के कारण बिरसा मुण्डा को किसी भी हाल में रास्ते से हटाना चाहते थे। आदिवासी समाज अपनी प्राचीन महानता और एक स्वतंत्र मुण्डा राज्य की फिर से स्थापना की जाएगी। राजा और जमींदार ने यह भी नहीं देख पाए कि आदिवासी उनकी प्रजा हैं। ये अगर चुप भी रह जाते तो आदिवासी अंग्रेजों से निपट सकते थे। बिरसा मुण्डा की नेतृत्व में आदिवासियों के उठे हाथियारों को कुंद करने के लिए ये

अंग्रेजों के पिटू बन गए। इन लोगों ने आदिवासियों की क्रान्तिकारी ताकत को नष्ट करने के लिए अंग्रेजों के साथ मिलकर आदिवासियों को देशद्रोही और खुद (राजा और जमींदार) देशभक्त बन गए। क्योंकि ये अंग्रेजों की गुलामी कर सकते थे किन्तु आदिवासियों का इनके बराबर आना इन्हें मंजूर नहीं था। राजा जमींदार और अंग्रेज यह जान गए थे कि बिरसा मुण्डा को महत्व देना या उसके साथ न्याय करना देश की दबी-कुचली कौमों को जुबान देना होगा। इस आंदोलन को नेता विहीन करने के लिए भारत के सामंतों की कुटिल रणनीति को अपनाकर बिरसा मुण्डा को जेल में डाल दिया और अनेक यातनाएं दी गईं। इस दौरान उनका स्वास्थ्य प्रतिदिन बिगड़ता गया। 30 मई 1900 को जेल में बिरसा मुण्डा के लिए भोजन लाया गया किन्तु उनका स्वास्थ्य ठीक न होने के कारण उन्होंने भोजन नहीं किया। 1 जून 1900 को जेल अधिकारियों ने डिप्टी कमिशनर

स्ट्रीटफील्ड को औपचारिक सूचना दी कि बिरसा को हैजा हो गया है। इसके बाद जेल के विशेष चिकित्सक ए.आर.एस.एंडरसन की देख रेख में बिरसा के स्वास्थ्य में सुधार हुआ। 8 जून को उनकी हालत खराब हो गई। 9 जून की सुबह 8 बजे बिरसा को दस्त होने के साथ ही उन्हें खून की उल्टियां होने से कुछ समय बाद बेहोश हो गए। 9 जून को ठीक 9 बजे बिरसा मुण्डा की मृत्यु हो गई। पोस्टमार्टम की औपचारिकता के बाद सरकार ने बिरसा के मृत्यु शरीर को जेल से बाहर ले जाकर हरमू नदी के किनारे उनके शव को जला दिया। बिरसा मुण्डा की मृत्यु को लेकर 75 वर्ष बाद यह रहस्योद्घाटन हुआ है कि बिरसा मुण्डा की मृत्यु उन्हें आर्सेनिक विष देन से हुई थी। अब यह बात समझ में आती है कि बिरसा के शव को उनके परिवार वालों को क्यों नहीं दिया गया।

**बिरसा धर्म के रूप में-**

बिरसा मुण्डा का जीवन संघर्ष सभी के लिए एक आदर्श ज्ञान का निर्माण करता है। बिरसा मुण्डा इस बात को भलि-भांति समझ चुके थे कि आदिवासियों के पतन का सबसे कड़ा कारण उनका भ्रमित करने वाला धर्म था। इनके धर्म सुधार न होने की स्थिति में अंधविश्वासों और बुराइयों से ऐसा अट गए कि यही वास्तविक मानने लगे। 20 वर्ष की अल्प आयु में ही बिरसा अपने समाज की इन कमजोरियों को दूर कर उन्हें एक नया दर्शन धर्म के रूप में दिया। जिसे बिरसा धर्म के नाम से जाना जाता है। बिरसा यदि ऐसा न करते तो आदिवासी हिन्दू और ईसाई धर्म में विलीन हो कर अपने अस्तित्व को ही समाप्त कर देते। बिरसा मुण्डा के शिष्यों द्वारा बिरसा धर्म का प्रचार-प्रसार होता रहा है। धर्म में जो नय लोग आते हैं उन्हें नानक कहा जाता है। बिरसा ने सामाजिक और व्यक्तिगत जीवन में बहुत कठोर नियम बनाये ताकि उस

समय जो कुछ जातीय शुद्धता बची थी उसे बचाया जा सके। बिरसा ने अपने बाद के जीवन में जो संयमित जीवन शुरू किया उसके बाद उनके अनुयायियों की संख्या में वृद्धि नहीं हुई। आदिवासी को बाहरी प्रभाव किस तरह भीतर ही भीतर खोखला बना रहे हैं। जनजातीय समाज में विघटन की प्रक्रिया आज भी जारी है। शहरीकरण एवं उद्योगीकरण की नई शक्तियों ने मुण्डा समाज में बिरसा धर्म के फैलने की संभावनाएं पूरी तरह समाप्त कर दी है।

## निष्कर्ष-

बिरसा मुण्डा का जीवन संघर्षों व सुधार की प्रवृत्ति के साथ शुरू हुआ। शिक्षा ग्रहण करने में वे निपुण थे। किन्तु विपरीत परिस्थिति होने के कारण वे उच्च स्तर की शिक्षा से वंचित रह गए। इनका परिवार रोजगार की तलाश में भटकते रहे। कुछ समय बाद उनका परिवार बम्बा चले गये। सामाजिक व्यवस्था के बदलाव के पक्षधर थे। आदिवासी अपनी आने

वाली पीढ़ी को समस्त गुलामियों से आजाद करना चाहते थे। समाज के ठेकेदारों ने ऐसी व्यवस्था बनाये हैं कि व्यक्ति जिंदा रहने को ही विकास समझे आज भी वही स्थिति बनी हुई है। सामाजिक कुरीतियां व अंधविश्वास ने भी आदिवासी समाज के पतन का मूल कारण रहा। संपदाओं के उपयोग हेतु अंग्रेज शासन ने आदिवासियों को यातनाएं दिये। समाज की ऐसी दयनीय स्थिति देख बेचैन हो जाते थे। इस परिस्थितियों को बदलने के लिए बिरसा ने नारा बुलंद किया। 24 दिसम्बर 1899 को बिरसा मुण्डा ने अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध

आन्दोलन की शुरुआत कर दी। ऐसी घटनाओं के चलते बिरसा मुण्डा को कई बार जेल जाना पड़ा। बिरसा मुण्डा का जीवन समाज सुधार व अत्याचारों के विरुद्ध था। बिरसा मुण्डा आज भी आदिवासियों के बीच भगवान के रूप में स्वीकार है। बिरसा मुण्डा का जीवन और उनका धर्म एक आदर्श के रूप में जाना जाता है। सभी मानव सद्भाव के साथ जीवन यापन करें। सामंतों व प्रशासन द्वारा बिरसा मुण्डा को आर्सेनिक जहर दिया गया। जिसके कारण 9 जून 1900 ई. को जेल में रहते ही उनकी मृत्यु हो गई।

### संदर्भ-

1. एम. पी. कमल- झारखंड का क्रान्तिदूत-बिरसा मुण्डा नवीन संस्करण- राजा पैकेट बुक मेन रोड बुराड़ी दिल्ली।
2. डा. सिंह सुरेश कुमार- उलगुलान बिरसा मुण्डा और उनका आंदोलन प्रथम संस्करण सम्यक प्रकाशन क्लब रोड पश्चिम पूरी नई दिल्ली।
3. आदिवासी लड़की-आवाज-ए-मूलनिवासी, प्रथम संस्करण रिगी पब्लिकेशन कृष्ण नगर खन्ना पंजाब इंडिया



# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## बिरसा मुंडा : जननायक और स्वतंत्रता सेनानी

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### प्रस्तावना :

बिरसा मुंडा ये नाम सुनते ही ज़ेहन में एक साहसी व्यक्ति की तस्वीर बन जाती है। वो ऐसे जननायक थे जिन्होंने आदिवासियों के हक के लिए लड़ाई लड़ी। वो सिर्फ आदिवासियों के ही नहीं आम लोगों के भी जननायक हैं। उन्होंने अंग्रेज़ी हुकूमत के जुल्म के खिलाफ जमकर अपनी आवाज़ बुलंद की थी। बिरसा मुंडा की कहानी हमें विपरीत परिस्थितियों भी हार न मानने की प्रेरणा देती है। बिरसा मुंडा को आदिवासी समाज 'भगवान बिरसा मुंडा' कहकर आज भी पूजता है। बिरसा मुंडा ने ब्रिटिश राज, जमींदारों, दिकुओं के खिलाफ स्वायत्तता और स्वशासन की मांग की। बिरसा मुंडा के संघर्ष के फलस्वरूप ही छोटा नागपुर टेनेंसी एक्ट, 1908 से इस क्षेत्र में लागू हुआ जो आज तक कायम है। यह एक्ट आदिवासी जमीन को गैर आदिवासी में हस्तांतरित करने में प्रतिबंध लगाता है और साथ ही आदिवासियों के मूल अधिकारों की रक्षा करता है। बिरसा मुंडा ने आदिवासियों के जननायक के रूप में

योगदान दिया है। भारत देश के आदिवासी लोगों का जननायक एवं पहला सरदार स्वतंत्रता सेनानी के रूप में बिरसा मुंडा की पहचान है। उन्नीसवीं सदी के अंतिम दशक में बिरसा मुंडा के नेतृत्व ने यह निष्कर्ष निकाला था कि उनके दुःख और वेदना का मूल कारण ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य है। बिरसा के नेतृत्व ने आदिवासियों को अपने अधिकारों के लिए लड़ने की प्रेरणा दी। वह चिंगारी आज भी हर आदिवासी के दिल में सुलग रही है। यह नयी पीढ़ी के लिए प्रेरणादायी रहेगी और बिरसा मुंडा को एक महान समाज सुधारक, रचनात्मक प्रतिभा के धनी और इन सबसे अधिक एक उत्साही राष्ट्रवादी और राष्ट्रीय नेताओं की श्रेणी में लाकर उनको खड़ा कर दिया। वह पहले आदिवासी क्रांतिकारी और सारे भारतवर्ष में आदिवासी लोगों के जननायक एवं लोकनायक के रूप में पहचान बनाने वाले एक प्रभावी नेता के रूप में जाने जाते हैं।

### बिरसा मुंडा का जन्म :

बिरसा का जन्म रांची जिले के उलीहातु नामक स्थान में लगभग 15 नवंबर

1875 में हुआ। बिरसा मुंडा जनजाति से थे। जो कि भारत की सबसे बड़ी आदिवासी जनजातियों में एक है। बिरसा के पिता सुगना मुंडा कृषक थे। उनका पूरा जीवन अत्यंत अभाव में गुजरा। उसका बड़ा भाई कोमता मुंडा उस गांव में रहता था। चाचा पसना मुंडा उलिहातु में रहते थे इसी वजह से बिरसा को चाचा ने संभाला था। गरीबी के कारण वह अपने चाचा के साथ अयूभाटू गाँव में पला बड़ा, बिरसा ने प्रारंभिक शिक्षा सलगा में स्थित जयपाल नाग द्वारा चलाए जा रहे स्कूल से की। पढाई में तेज होने के कारण जयपाल नाग ने उन्हें जर्मन लुथरेन मिशन स्कूल चाईबासा में डालने की सिफारिश की। इसी समय उनका ईसाई धर्म में धर्म परिवर्तन हुआ और उन्हें बिरसा डेव्हिड नाम मिला जो बाद में बिरसा दौद पूर्ती के नाम से उनकी पहचान हो गई। इनका मन हमेशा अपने समाज की ब्रिटिश शासकों द्वारा की गयी बुरी दशा पर सोचता रहता था। उन्होंने मुंडा लोगों को अंग्रेजों से मुक्ति पाने के लिये अपना नेतृत्व प्रदान किया। कॉलेज स्कुली वाद-विवाद में हमेशा प्रखरता के साथ वनवासियों की जल, जंगल और जमीन पर हक की वकालत करते थे। उन्हीं दिनों एक पादरी डॉ. नोट्रेट ने लोगों को लालच दिया कि अगर वह ईसाई बनें और उनके अनुदेशों का पालन करते रहें तो वे मुंडा

सरदारों की छीनी हुई भूमि को वापस करा देंगे। लेकिन 1886-87 में मुंडा सरदारों ने जब भूमि वापसी का आंदोलन किया तो इस आंदोलन को न केवल दबा दिया गया बल्कि ईसाई मिशनरियों द्वारा इसकी भर्त्सना की गई जिससे बिरसा मुंडा को गहरा आघात लगा। उनकी बगावत को देखते हुए उन्हें विद्यालय से निकाल दिया गया। फलतः 1890 में बिरसा तथा उसके पिता चाईबासा से वापस आ गए। 1886 से 1890 तक बिरसा का चाईबासा मिशन के साथ रहना उनके व्यक्तित्व का निर्माण काल था। यही वह दौर था जिसने बिरसा मुंडा के अंदर बदले और स्वाभिमान की ज्वाला पैदा कर दी। बिरसा मुंडा पर संथाल विद्रोह, चुआर आंदोलन, कोल विद्रोह का भी व्यापक प्रभाव पड़ा। अपनी जाति की दुर्दशा, सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक एवं धार्मिक अस्मिता को खतरे में देख उनके मन में क्रांति की भावना जाग उठी। उन्होंने मन ही मन यह संकल्प लिया कि मुंडाओं का शासन वापस लाएंगे तथा अपने लोगों में जागृति पैदा करेंगे। १८९४ में मानसून के छोटानागपुर में असफल होने के कारण भयंकर अकाल और महामारी फैली हुई थी। बिरसा ने पूरे मनोयोग से अपने लोगों की सेवा की।

**बिरसा मुंडा की दशा और दिशा :**

ब्रिटिश सरकार के खिलाफ संघर्ष और आंदोलन ब्रिटिश शासनकाल में सरकार की नीतियों के कारण आदिवासी कृषि व्यवस्था, सामंती व्यवस्था में बदलाव आ रहा था। आदिवासी कृषि प्रणाली पर आघात हो रहा था और गैर आदिवासी लोगों को कृषि के लिए बुलाया गया। इस प्रकार आदिवासी लोगों की जमीन जाने लगी इससे आदिवासी लोगों का शोषण बढ़ा। मुंडा जनजाति छोटा नागपुर क्षेत्र में आदिकाल से रह रहे थे। माजिद मिया के अनुसार "भारतीय भूखंड प्रागैतिहासिक काल से ही कोल, भील, मुंडा आदि जनजातियों का निवास स्थान रहा है। एक समय ऐसा था पुरा छोटा नागपुर क्षेत्र घने वनों से आच्छादित था। सर्वप्रथम कोल जाति के लोगों ने इन वनों को साफ किया और यहाँ अपना गाँव बसाया। 'कोल' जाति कई गोत्रों में बँटी हुई है। इनमे से एक गोत्र था मुंडा। वास्तव में कोल जाति का जो गोत्र गाँव बसाता था, वहाँ का मूल निवासी हो जाता था। इसके बावजूद अंग्रेजी सरकार के आने पर आदिवासियों पर अनेक प्रकार के टैक्स लागू किये गए। इस बीच जमींदार आदिवासियों और ब्रिटिश सरकार के बीच मध्यस्थ होने का काम करने लगे, इस वजह से ब्रिटिश सरकार ने आदिवासी इलाको पर अपनी पकड़ बनाई। ब्रिटिश सरकार से आदिवासियों को न्याय नहीं

मिला, इसीलिए आदिवासियों ने संघर्ष का रास्ता चुना। ब्रिटिश राज से लोहा लेने वाले महानायक बिरसा मुंडा का जीवन यह रहस्यमय और नई पीढ़ी को चौंका देने वाला है। ब्रिटिश शासन के खिलाफ उन्होंने जन आंदोलन किया और लोगों में कम उम्र में मानवी चेतना पैदा की। जननायक के संदर्भ में अजहर हाशमी लिखते हैं कि "भारतीय इतिहास में बिरसा मुंडा एक ऐसे नायक थे जिन्होंने भारत के झारखंड में अपने क्रांतिकारी चिंतन से उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्द्ध में आदिवासी समाज की दशा और दिशा बदलकर नवीन सामाजिक और राजनितिक युग का सुत्रपात किया। " 1831-32 में कोल विद्रोह के बाद इन सब जगहों पर भी जमींदार और जागीरदार चले। जिसकी वजह से जमींदार और जागीरदार स्वतंत्र मालिक बने और मुंडाओं के अधिकार का क्षेत्र ही उनका नहीं रहा। आदिवासियों पर जमींदार और जागीरदार के साथ-साथ ब्रिटिश लोगों ने भी अत्याचार किया जिसकी वजह से आदिवासियों में अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ आक्रोश पैदा हुआ। बिरसा ने नारा दिया कि ब्रिटिश महारानी का राज खत्म हो और हमारा राज स्थापित हो। इस तरह बिरसा ने आदिवासी स्वायत्तता, स्वशासन पर बल दिया। आदिवासी समाज भूमिहीन होता जा रहा था और मजदूरी

करने पर विवश हो चुका था। इस कारण बिरसा के आंदोलन ने ब्रिटिश सरकार को आदिवासी हित के लिए कानून लाने पर मजबूर किया और आदिवासियों में इच्छाशक्ति जगाई। बिरसा ने दिकुओ-दीकू -गैर आदिवासी, शोषण करनेवाले के खिलाफ लोगों को खड़ा किया और लोगों को एकजुट किया। बिरसा के विद्रोह को रोकने के लिए 500 रु का इनाम भी घोषित किया। सन् 1900 में ब्रिटिश सेना और मुंडा सैनिकों के बीच दुम्बरी पहाड़ियों में संघर्ष हुआ जिसमें अनेक आदिवासी सैनिक शहीद हुए, हालांकि बिरसा वहाँ से बच निकले। 3 मार्च 1900 को बिरसा जम्कोपाई जंगल चक्रधर में ठहरे हुए थे जहाँ सोते वक्त उन्हें गिरफ्तार किया गया।

## ‘लगान माफी’ के लिए खोला मोर्चा:

बिरसा ने जब देखा कि धीरे-धीरे अंग्रेज लगान न देने के कारण आदिवासियों की जमीनों पर कब्जा करते जा रहे हैं, तो उनसे न रहा गया। उन्होंने खुलेआम अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध विद्रोह की घोषणा कर दी। उन्होंने ऐलान कर दिया कि वह अब अंग्रेजों के नियमों का पालन नहीं करेंगे। उन्होंने अंग्रेजों को ललकारते हुए कहा हमारी जमीनें सदियों से हमारी हैं और तुम इसे हमसे छीन नहीं सकते। बेहतर होगा कि

तुम लोग अपने वतन वापस लौट जाओ, वरना हम तुम्हारी लाशों के ढेर लगा देंगे। लेकिन शासन ने इसको अनसुना करते हुए बिरसा और उनके साथियों की गिरफ्तारी की तैयारियां शुरू कर दीं। 9 अगस्त, 1895 को पहली बार बिरसा को गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया, लेकिन उनके साथी उन्हें छुड़ाने में कामयाब रहे। बिरसा की गिरफ्तारी से अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ आंदोलन की आग बढ़ चुकी थी। बिरसा ने भी जेल से निकलकर इसको ठंडा नहीं होने दिया। उन्होंने संघर्ष में सक्रिय लोगों से सहयोग की अपील की। कई छोटे-छोटे संगठन बनाए गये। डोम्बरी पहाड़ी पर मुंडाओं की बैठक हुई। इसमें अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ संघर्ष की रणनीति बनी। वहाँ मौजूद कुछ लोग चाहते थे कि शांति से विद्रोह किया जाए, जबकि ज्यादा लोग चाहते थे कि अंग्रेजों को ईंट का जवाब पत्थर से देना चाहिए। उनके हिसाब से जमाना बदल चुका था, इसलिए उन्हें हथियारों का सहारा लेना चाहिए। बिरसा ने इस पर मुहर लगा दी और यहीं से शुरू हो गया हथियार बंद विद्रोह। आदिवासियों की इस उग्र तैयारी की खबर जैसे ही अंग्रेजों को मिली, उन्होंने अपनी दमन नीति से इसे दबाने की

कोशिश की. इस आंदोलन से जुड़े तमाम केंद्रों पर छापेमारी की गई. एक बड़े पैमाने पर गिरफ्तारियां की गई. निर्दोष लोगों की जमकर पिटाई होने लगी. आम आदिवासियों की घर-सम्पत्ति तक अंग्रेज सैनिक लूटकर ले जाने लगे. यह देखकर आंदोलनकारियों से रहा नहीं गया. उन्होंने भी जवाबी कार्रवाई करते हुए अंग्रेजों के ठिकानों पर हमला किया और आगजनी की. इसमें ढेर सारे अंग्रेज अफसर मारे गये.

## ‘धरती पुत्र’ बिरसा मुंडा:

बिरसा ने जब जन्म लिया तो उस समय अंग्रेजों का दमन चरम पर था. आदिवासियों की जमीनें छीनी जा रही थीं. आदिवासियों की कृषि प्रणाली में इतने बदलाव किए जा चुके थे कि वह भूखे मरने की कगार पर खड़े होते जा रहे थे. इसके साथ ही जबरन धर्म परिवर्तन का दौर चल रहा था. बिरसा जैसे-जैसे बड़े हुए उन्होंने यह सब देखा और महसूस किया. उनके अन्दर विरोध का भाव पनप चुका था, क्रोध की ज्वाला उनकी नन्हीं आंखों में देखी जा सकती थी. लेकिन उम्र में वह छोटे थे इसलिए वह ज्यादा कुछ कर नहीं कर सकते थे.

उन्होंने अपने गुस्से को पाला और सही समय का इंतजार किया. माना जाता है कि उन्हें भी एक क्रिस्टियन स्कूल में पढ़ाई करने के लिए ईसाई धर्म को अपनाना पड़ा था. हालांकि, बाद में उन्होंने पूर्ण रूप से हिन्दू धर्म में वापसी की और हिन्दू ग्रंथों का पढ़कर ज्ञान प्राप्त किया. उन्होंने अपने आदिवासी लोगों को हिन्दू धर्म के सिद्धांतों को समझाया था. उन्होंने गाय की पूजा करने और गौ-हत्या का विरोध करने की लोगों को सलाह दी. साथ ही उन्होंने अंग्रेजों की दमन नीती का विरोध करने के लिए अपने लोगों को जागरूक किया. उन्होंने सभी को आवाज देते हुए कहा ‘रानी का शासन खत्म करो और अपना साम्राज्य स्थापित करो’ धीरे-धारे आदिवासियों के हितों के लिए उनका विद्रोह इतना उग्र हो गया था कि उन्हें लोग ‘धरती अबा’ यानी धरती पुत्र कहकर बुलाने लगे थे.

## निष्कर्ष :

बिरसा मुंडा का यह संघर्ष, सामाजिक, धार्मिक और राजनैतिक आयाम से भरा, एक पूर्ण आंदोलन था, जिसने धार्मिक, जातीय और राजनैतिक आंदोलनों की पूरी श्रृंखला को

प्रभावित किया। बिरसा मुंडा ने आदिवासी बंधुओं की संस्कृति और पहचान को बचाने के लिए आवाज उठायी और बढ़ते जुल्म पर आवाज उठाकर अपने कौम के अस्तित्व को बचाया और आदिवासियों के मानवी अधिकारों एवं हक का मुद्दा, महिला सशक्तिकरण, गरीबी, अल्प विकास, अंधविश्वास और आदिवासियों के शोषण को उजागर किया तथा तीसरी धारा का प्रतिनिधित्व आदिवासी महिलाओं को बिरसा आंदोलन में सम्मिलित किया। युग प्रवर्तक और आदिवासी समुदाय के मार्गदर्शक बिरसा मुंडा के रूप में उनका संघर्ष आज भी हमारे जीवन को प्रेरित करता है। बिरसा मुंडा का नायकत्व मनुष्य के मुक्ति संघर्ष का ध्वज प्रतिक है। बिरसा मुंडा का जनआंदोलन भारतीय स्वतंत्रता

संग्राम का बिगुल माना जाता है। इसीलिए नई पीढ़ी के लिए उनकी संघर्ष गाथा प्रेरणादायी है। बिरसा मुंडा का मौजूदा साहित्य हमारे सामने कई प्रश्न व सवाल खड़े करता है। जहाँ एक तरफ भारत सरकार बिरसा को एक स्वतंत्रता सेनानी और देशभक्त के रूप में मानती है वहीं दूसरी तरफ बिरसा के मूल सिद्धांतों का खुला उल्लंघन करती है। जहाँ सीएनटी एक्ट बिरसा और अन्य शहिद आदिवासियों के बलिदान एवं योगदान का फल माना जाता है। इस प्रकार बिरसा मुंडा जैसे वीर स्वतंत्रता सेनानी के इतिहास से हमें आज के इंटरनेट युग में अनेक सीख मिलती है। बिरसा मुंडा का इतिहास और सिद्धांत आदिवासी आंदोलन के लिए ऐतिहासिक पर्व है।

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## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में बिरसा मुंडा का योगदान

संजीव कुमार सिंह

पीएचडी शोध छात्र

राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग

डॉ० राममनोहर लोहिया अवध विश्वविद्यालय

अयोध्या

### परिचय-

बिरसा मुंडा का जन्म बिहार के उलीहातू गाँव जिला रांची (वर्तमान झारखण्ड ) में १५ नवंबर १८७५ को हुआ था। बिरसा को २५ साल की उम्र में ही आदिवासियों की समस्या का काफी ज्ञान हो गया था। उन्होंने अपनी प्रारंभिक शिक्षा चाईबासा के जर्मन मिशन स्कूल से प्राप्त की जिससे उन्हें हिन्दू तथा ईसाई दोनों धर्मों के विषय में ज्ञान प्राप्त था परन्तु उस समय के मिशन स्कूल के नियमों के मुताबिक वहां शिक्षा प्राप्ति हेतु प्रवेश लेने से पूर्व ईसाई धर्म अपनाना जरूरी था। अतः बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा ईसाई धर्म अपना लिया गया और उनका नाम बिरसा डेविड रखा गया। बिरसा मुंडा के माता-पिता

द्वारा भी ईसाई धर्म अपनाया गया था परन्तु शीघ्र ही उनका उस धर्म से विश्वास उठ गया और वे पुनः अपने मूल धर्म में लौट आए। सरकार जमींदार सेठ-साहूकार सभी के द्वारा मिलकर आदिवासियों का शोषण किया जा रहा था। इन सब परिस्थितियों से छुटकारा पाने के लिए ही बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा उलगुलान संघर्ष प्रारम्भ किया गया था जो लगभग ६ वर्षों तक चला।

### उलगुलान संघर्ष-

बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा उलगुलान संघर्ष १८९५ में प्रारंभ किया गया इस संघर्ष का प्रमुख केंद्र छोटानागपुर का क्षेत्र था जोकि अंग्रेजों के शासन के दौरान बंगाल प्रेसीडेंसी के अंतर्गत आता था द्य

यह क्षेत्र बीते कई वर्षों से आदिवासियों के ही एकाधिकार में रहा था और उन्हें अनेक प्रकार से प्रताड़ित किया जाता था। जिसके कारण उनका जंगलों से पलायन हो रहा था। इतना सब होने के बावजूद भी महाजनों और साहूकारों को सरकारी संरक्षण प्राप्त था और तत्कालीन अंग्रेजी न्यायालय मूक दर्शक बने हुए थे।

छोटानागपुर के गांवों की परती भूमि को सरकार द्वारा भारतीय वन कानून १८७८ के माध्यम से वनों को तीन वर्गों आरक्षित वन, ग्रामीण वन तथा संरक्षित वनों में बांटा गया और जंगलों पर सरकारी नियंत्रण स्थापित कर लिया गया, जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप मुंडा सरदारों १८७९ में न्यायालय का रुख किया गया परन्तु वंहा से भी उन्हें कोई न्याय नहीं प्राप्त हुआ। न्यायालय द्वारा न्याय मिलता न देखकर धरती आबा (पिता) बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा स्वयं अपने प्रयासों द्वारा आदिवासी लोगों को इस समस्या से छुटकारा दिलाने का बीड़ा उठाया।

१८५७ के ग़दर के पूर्व भी आदिसियों द्वारा कई विद्रोह किए गए परंतु सरकार द्वारा उन्हें लूट-पाट और डकैती जैसे हीन नाम देकर उनकी महत्ता को दबा दिया जाता था। जिसके उदाहरण के रूप में हम १८३० के दशक के कोल विद्रोह और १८५५ के संथाल विद्रोह को ले सकते हैं। ये विद्रोह केवल ब्रिटिश शोषण के खिलाफ न होकर उन समस्त जमींदारों और सेठ-महाजनों के खिलाफ भी था जो किसी न किसी रूप में इसमें शामिल थे। बिरसा मुंडा इन सेठ-महाजनों और साहूकारों को अपनी मातृभाषा में दिक्क कहकर संबोधित करते थे।

### अबुआ दिशोम रे अबुआ राज-

यानि अपनी धरती उसपर अपना राज। बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा शुरू किए गए उलगुलान विद्रोह का यही अर्थ था यानि अपने खोए हुए अधिकारों की पुनः प्राप्ति। वास्तव में यह एक क्रांति थी जोकि अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध अपने अधिकारों की प्राप्ति हेतु शुरू की गई। उलगुलान

का अर्थ होता है असीम कोलाहल। यह एक ऐसा विद्रोह था जिसमें आदिवासियों द्वारा जो आदिवासियों द्वारा अपने जल जंगल और जमीन की पुनः प्राप्ति हेतु शुरू किया गया था। जिसके तहत सरकार द्वारा कई बार उन्हें गिरफ्तार और रिहा किया गया। १८९५ के इस विद्रोह द्वारा बिरसा मुंडा ने अपने विचारों और योजनाओं को एक दिशा प्रदान किया और उसे कार्य रूप में परिणित किया। इनके द्वारा इसी योजना के तहत २८ जून १८९८ को सामाजिक बराबरी हेतु चुटिया मंदिर का अभियान प्रारंभ किया गया। १८९९ में ईसाई त्यौहार क्रिसमस के समय ७००० स्त्री-पुरुष एकत्रित होकर क्रांति का बिगुल फूँका जोकि बहुत ही जल्द अन्य क्षेत्रों खूँटी तमार बसिया और रांची तक फैल गया। ५ जनवरी १९०० तक इस क्रांति की लहर समस्त मंदा जनजाति तक फैल गई, जिसमें बहुत पुलिस वाले इस झड़प में हताहत हुए और करीब १००० घरों को फूँक दिया

गया। इन समस्त घटनाक्रमों के बाद अबुआ दिसुन (स्वतंत्रता की घोषणा) कर दी गई। उधर अंग्रेजों द्वारा बिरसा मुंडा को गिरफ्तार करने के लिए सेना की एक टुकड़ी को तत्काल हिंसाग्रस्त इलाके में भेज दिया गया। साथ ही उन पर ५०० रूपए इनाम भी रखा गया जोकि आज के हिसाब से उस समय लाखों रूपए के बराबर था। डुम्बारी पहाड़ी पर अंग्रेजों द्वारा १३ अप्रैल १९१९ की भांति एक और जलियांवाला बाग जैसा हत्याकांड दोहराया गया, जब अंग्रेजी सेना द्वारा सैकड़ों लोगों पर गोलियां चलाई गई। जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप वहां चारों ओर वहां गरीब, निराश्रित आदिवासियों की लाशें बिखरी पड़ी थीं। जिसमें से कुछ लाशों को तो खाई में फेंक दिया गया तो कुछ को जिन्दा ही जला दिया गया। इसी बीच ४ फ़रवरी १९०० को जराई केला के रोगतो गाँव के सात मुंडाओं ने ५०० रूपए की लालच में सोते हुए बिरसा मुंडा को खाट सहित बांधकर अंग्रेजी सेना को सौंप

दिया। अतः अंग्रेजी सेना द्वारा उन्हें ३ फ़रवरी १९०० को चक्रधरपुर के पास से गिरफ़्तार कर लिया गया।

महाश्वेता देवी ने अपने उपन्यास जंगल के दावेदार में लिखा है- अगर उसे धरती पर दो वक्त दो थाली घाटो बरस में चार मोटे कपड़े जाड़े में पुआल भरे थैले का आराम महाजन के हाथों छुटकारा रोशनी करने के लिए महुआ का तेल घाटो खाने के लिए काला नमक जंगल की जड़े और शहद जंगल के हिरन और खरगोश चिड़ियों आदि का मांस ये सब मिल जाते तो बिरसा मुंडा शायद भगवान बनते।

### क्रांतिकारी सोच और आदिवासी एकता-

बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा लोगों के भीतर संघर्ष करने की भावना का विकास अपने सम्पूर्ण जीवन काल में किया जाता रहा। उन्होंने किसान और समाज के मूल्यों के विरोधी अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध सदैव आदिवासियों को एकता के सूत्र में बाँधने का कार्य किया जिनका उद्देश्य व्यापार

के नाम पर लोगों को लूटकर अपने औद्योगिक पूँजी का विस्तार करना करना था। बिरसा मुंडा द्वारा अपनी क्रांतिकारी सोच के तहत अपने मुंडा अनुयायियों को साथ लेकर दो संगठन का निर्माण किया और उनमें से एक को मुंडा धर्म के प्रचार तथा दूसरे को राजनीतिक कार्यों को करने में लगा दिया गया। अपने इसी क्रांतिकारी सोच के कारण ये अंग्रेजों के लिए परेशानी का कारण बने हुए थे। इनके इसी प्रयासों के कारण बहुत से आदिवासी ईसाई धर्म का त्याग करने लगे। उन्होंने आदिवासियों को एकता के सूत्र में बाँधने तथा अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध इक्कट्ठे होकर संघर्ष करने के लिए आदिवासियों में फैले अन्धविश्वास पर कठोर प्रयास किया। उनका मानना था की आदिवासी समाज सामाजिक कुरीतियों और आडम्बरों में फंसा हुआ है तथा ज्ञान के प्रकाश से वंचित है। आदिवासी ज्ञानाभाव के कारण जल्दी ही ईसाई मिशनरियों के बहकावे में आ जाते

हैं और अपना धर्म परिवर्तित कर लेते हैं। उन्होंने अपनी इसी क्रांतिकारी सोच के माध्यम से सदैव आदिवासियों को एकता के सूत्र में बांधकर भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन में संघर्ष हेतु प्रेरित करते रहें।

### उलगुलान बनाम नक्सलवाद-

नक्सलवाद की शुरुवात पश्चिम बंगाल के गाँव नक्सलवाड़ी से हुई। उसी गाँव के नाम पर उसका नाम नक्सलवाद पड़ा। इस आन्दोलन की शुरुवात कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के नेता चारू मजूमदार और कानू सान्याल ने १९६७ में की थी द्य १९६७ में नक्सलवादियों ने स्वयं को कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी से स्वयं को पृथक करके भूमिगत होकर सरकार के विरुद्ध लड़ाई छेड़ दी जो आज भी जारी है।

१८ मई १९६७ को सिलीगुड़ी की किसान सभा में किसानों और भूमिहीनों ने कनु सान्याल को समर्थन देने की घोषणा की। कुछ दिन बाद लोगों के द्वारा जमींदारों पर हमले के फलस्वरूप पुलिस द्वारा कई किसान नेताओं को गिरफ्तार कर लिया

गया जिन्हें छुड़ाने के लिए आदिवासियों के समूह द्वारा पुलिस पर हमला कर दिया गया जिसमे पुलिस की जवाबी कार्यवाही में ९ वयस्कों और २ बच्चों की मृत्यु हो गई। इस घटना ने गरीब लोगों और आदिवासियों को नकासत्वादी आन्दोलन में शामिल होने को प्रोत्साहित किया।

वास्तव में आदिवासी आन्दोलन उलगुलान और नक्सलवाड़ी आन्दोलन कालक्रम की दृष्टि से भले ही पृथक सत्ता रखते हों परन्तु उनमें विचारधारा की साम्यता देखी जा सकती है। जिस प्रकार से सरकार द्वारा आदिवासियों को मुख्यधारा में लाने के नाम पर उन्हें उनकी जल जंगल और जमीन से वंचित किया जा रहा है तथा उनकी वर्षों की सभ्यता और संस्कृति को नष्ट किया जा रहा है।

आज देश की बहुसंख्यक जनसंख्या आज भी अदिवाशियों को जंगली असभ्य और अनपढ़ से ज्यादा

कुछ स्वीकार करने को तैयार और अब उनके लिए नक्सल जैसे शब्दों का प्रयोग किया जा रहा है।

आज भी हमारे देश की आदिवासियों की संख्या लगभग ११ प्रतिशत के आस-पास है। आजादी के इतने वर्षों के बाद भी आज आदिवासी उपेक्षित दशा में हैं जो अपनी संस्कृति तथा रीति रिवाज की रक्षा हेतु संघर्षरत हैं। जंगलों के अधिग्रहण के कारण आज आदिवासियों को विस्थापन और पलायन का सामना करना पड़ रहा है जिससे सबसे ज्यादा प्रभावित आदिवासियों की नई पीढ़ियाँ हो रहीं हैं जो न तो अपने रीति रिवाजों और संस्कृतियों को ही सहेजने में सफल हो रहे हैं और न तो शहरों के अनुरूप स्वयं को ढालने में सफल हुए हैं। ९ जून १९०० को बिरसा मुंडा की मृत्यु के बाद वह आज भले ही उन लोगों के बीच न हों परन्तु अपने लोगों की स्वतंत्रता और अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध भारत की स्वतंत्रता हेतु किए

संघर्ष और प्रयासों के कारण वह आज भी वहां के लोक गीतों और जातीय साहित्य में जीवित हैं।

बिरसा मुंडा का आदिवासियों के प्रति किए गए कार्यों और अंग्रेजों के विरुद्ध भारत की स्वतंत्रता हेतु उलगुलान जैसे स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष में उनके योगदान को साहित्यकार हरिराम मीणा द्वारा लिखित कविता के कुछ अंश इस प्रकार हैं-

मैं केवल देह नहीं  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हूँ  
पुश्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से  
बेदखल कर नहीं सकता  
उलगुलान! उलगुलान!! उलगुलान!!!

### योगदान की समीक्षा-

९ जून १९०० को महज २५ वर्ष की अल्पायु में कारागार में बिरसा मुंडा की मृत्यु हो गई। ऐसा कहा जाता है की मृत्यु से पूर्व बिरसा मुंडा को खून की

उल्टी हुई थी। ऐसा कहा जाता है की अंग्रेजों द्वारा बिरसा मुंडा को मीठा जहर दिया जाता था जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप उनकी मृत्यु हो गई। जबकि अंग्रेजों द्वारा उनकी मृत्यु का कारण हैजे को बताया गया था। बिरसा मुंडा की मृत्यु के बाद भी आदिवासियों का अपनी जल जंगल और जमीन पर अधिकार की लड़ाई आज भी जारी है। जिसमें पुराने शोषणकारी तो चले गए परन्तु आज उनका स्थान नए शोषणकारियों द्वारा ले लिया गया है। महात्मा गाँधी द्वारा जिस समय अश्वेतों को दक्षिण अफ्रीकी सरकार के अत्याचारों से मुक्ति हेतु एकता के सूत्र में बांधकर एकजुट करने का कार्य किया जा रहा था उसी समय बिरसा मुंडा अपने आदिवासी भाइयों के साथ अंग्रेजी शोषण के विरुद्ध एक महत्वपूर्ण लड़ाई लड़ चुके थे। महात्मा गाँधी से लगभग ६ वर्ष छोटे बिरसा मुंडा का जीवनकाल भले ही २५ वर्ष और उनका संघर्ष ५ वर्ष का रहा हो परन्तु अपने छोटे से कालक्रम में

देश की स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष में आदिवासियों के लिए जो कार्य किया उसने उन्हें सदैव के लिए अमर बना दिया। आज भी बिहार झारखण्ड छत्तीसगढ़ उड़ीसा और पश्चिम बंगाल समेत देश के समस्त इलाकों में बिरसा मुंडा को उनके किए हुए कार्यों हेतु भगवान की तरह पूजा जाता है।

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**Section-III**  
**MARATHI**

## क्रांतिसूर्य बिरसा मुंडा यांचा भारतीय आदिवासी समुदायावर कार्य व प्रभाव

दत्तात्रय निवृत्ती रावण

(एम.ए.भाग -२)

राज्यशास्त्र अधिविभाग,

शिवाजी विद्यापीठ, कोल्हापूर

### प्रस्तावना:

भारतीय आदिवासींचा संघर्ष अठराव्या शतकापासून सुरू होता. बिहार, झारखंड आणि ओडिसा मधील जननायक म्हणून व अवघ्या २ वर्षात भारतीय आदिवासींच्या जीवनाचा मसीहा म्हणून ओळखले जाणारे बिरसा मुंडा हे एक युगपुरुष होते. १९व्या शतकातील भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य चळवळीच्या इतिहासातील बिरसा हा एक महत्वाचा दुवा असल्याचे सिद्ध झाले आहे. भारतीय आदिवासींना जल-जंगल-जमीन आणि त्यांच्या नैसर्गिक स्रोतांमधून अधिकार सतत काढून टाकले गेले होते आणि त्या विरोधात आवाज उठवण्याचे काम बिरसा यांनी केले म्हणून त्यांना 'भारतीय

आदिवासींचा देव बिरसा मुंडा म्हणून संबोधले जाऊ लागले. पुढे जाऊन बिरसा मुंडा यांनी लोकांना शेतकऱ्यांचे शोषण करणाऱ्या जमीनदारांच्या विरोधात लढा देण्यास प्रेरित केले. भारतीय आदिवासी समाजाची केविलवाणी स्थिती बघून ते पेटून उठले व त्यांनी स्वावलंबन व स्वाभिमानासाठी उलगुलान ची घोषणा केली.

### बिरसा मुंडा यांचे आयुष्य:

एखाद्या महान माणसाच्या कृती, योगदानाचे आणि त्याच्या जीवनाचे मूल्यमापन केले जाते जेणेकरून त्याने राष्ट्रीय आणि सामाजिक समस्या कशा सोडवल्या आहेत आणि बऱ्याच कठोर संघर्षांसह

कृती केली आहे. अश्या आदिवासी वीर बिरसा मुंडा यांचा जन्म १५ नोव्हेंबर १८७५ मध्ये सध्याच्या झारखंड राज्यामध्ये रांची जिल्ह्यातील अलिहतू गावामध्ये एका झोपडीत झाला. बिरसा यांच्या कुटुंबाची परिस्थिती हालाखीची होती. त्यामुळे बिरसांच्या जन्मानंतर सर्व कुटुंब उदरनिर्वाहासाठी बिरसांची आत्या दासकीर हिच्या आयुभातु या गावी गेले. बिरसांना शिक्षणाची आवड होती. त्यांचे प्राथमिक शिक्षण सलग या गावामध्ये झाले. तर पुढे ते बिरसांचे मोठे भाऊ कानु यांनी त्यांना जर्मन ईसाई मिशन स्कूलमध्ये (१८८६) दाखल केले. तत्पूर्वी शाळेच्या अटीनुसार त्यांना ख्रिश्चन धर्म स्वीकारावा लागत असे. बिरसांना येथेच मिशनऱ्यांच्या दुष्टचक्रांबद्दलचा पहिला अनुभव आला. मिशनरी आदिवासींचे शोषण करतात म्हणून त्यांनी मिशनरी शाळा सोडून दिली. आणि त्यामुळे शिक्षण अर्धवट राहिले.

पुढे त्यांचा विवाह हिराबाई नावाच्या कन्येशी झाला.

बिरसा मुंडा यांचे भारतीय

## आदिवासीसाठी कार्य:

१९व्या शतकाच्या उत्तरार्धात इंग्रजी कंपनीने भारताच्या दोन तृतीयांश भागावर कब्जा केला होता आणि ही मालिका अजूनही सुरुच होती. आधुनिक झारखंड आणि जुना बिहारचा भगवान बिरसा मुंडा यांनी पाणी, जंगल आणि जमिनीवरील आदिवासींवर दावा सांगण्यासाठी इंग्रजांशी लढा दिला. बिरसा मुंडा हे लोक नायक असून भारतातील आदिवासी स्वातंत्र्य सेनानी होते. त्यांनी ब्रिटीशांविरुद्ध स्वातंत्र्यलढ्यात महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका बजावली. १९व्या शतकानंतर त्यांनी रियासी भारतातील काही भाग ताब्यात घेतला होता. छोटा नागपुर, बिरसा मुंडाचा परिसर आणि आदिवासी त्यांचे हक्क हिसकावून घेण्यासाठी वनीकरण कायद्यासह

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इतरही अनेक कायदे लागू केले गेले होते आणि पाहता पाहता आदिवासींचे सर्व हक्क काढून घेण्यात आले. आदिवासी लोकांना जंगलात मेंढरे चरण्यासाठी नेता येत नव्हते, जंगलातून लाकडे गोळा करता येत नव्हते. त्यामुळे या लोकांना आपलं दैनंदिन जीवन जगण्यात बरीच अडचणींचा सामना करावा लागत. त्याच वेळी, इंग्रजांनी जंगलांच्या बाह्य सीमांवर बाहेरील लोकांची वस्ती करण्यास सुरवात केली, मुंडा लोग ती जमीन आपली सामान्य मालमत्ता मानत असताना, त्या बाह्य वस्तीतील लोकांना ब्रिटीशांनी त्या जागेची मालकी दिली. त्यामुळे आदिवासींमध्ये असंतोष निर्माण झाला आणि याच असंतोषाचं चळवळीमध्ये रूपांतर झाले. आणि याच नेतृत्व क्रांतिसूर्य बिरसा मुंडा यांनी केलं. बिरसा मुंडा यांचा स्वभाव मिळून मिसळून राहण्याचा होता. त्यामुळे तरुण वयात त्यांनी

समवयस्क आणि समविचारी सहकार्यांचे संघटन केले. बिरसा मुंडा, ऐन तारुण्याच्या काळात, ब्रिटिश, मिशनरी आणि बाहेरील लोकांविरुद्धच्या चळवळीचा एक भाग बनले. १८८५मध्ये बिरसा मुंडा यांनी घोषित केले की, “आम्ही ब्रिटिश शासन प्रणालीविरुद्ध बंडखोरी जाहीर करतो आणि ब्रिटिश नियम कधीच पाळणार नाही, हे गोरे लोक, आमच्या देशात तुम्ही काय करता?” छोटा नागपूर हे शतकानुशतके आमचे आहे आणि आपण ते आमच्यापासून दूर घेऊ शकत नाही, म्हणून आपल्या देशात परत जाणे चांगले. नाहीतर तुमचे मृतदेह पाडले जातील. या वाक्यांचा लोकांच्या मनावर खोल परिणाम झाला व लोकांमध्ये आत्मविश्वास जागृत होण्यास सुरवात झाली.

**भारतीय आदिवासी चळवळी:**

१९ व्या शतकापासून ते विसाव्या शतकापर्यंत मुंडा जमातींनी बऱ्याच वेळा इंग्रजी सरकार आणि भारतीय राज्यकर्ते, जमींदार यांच्याविरुद्ध बंड केले. १९व्या शतकाच्या शेवटच्या दशकात बंडखोरी ही बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या नेतृत्वात, ज्याला उलागुलन म्हणूनही ओळखले जाते, हे एकोणिसाव्या शतकातील सर्वात महत्वाच्या आदिवासी चळवळींपैकी एक आहे. या बंडखोरीत हजारो मुंडा आदिवासी शहीद झाले. भारतात रांची आणि सिंहभूमी आदिवासी बिरसा मुंडाला 'बिरसा भगवान' म्हणून ओळखतात.

आज उडीसा, बिहार, पश्चिम बंगाल आणि मध्य प्रदेशातील प्रदेशांमध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणात वास्तवास आहेत. ब्रिटिश यांच्या औपनिवेशिक व्यवस्थेने भारतीय आदिवासी यांच्या कृषी व्यवस्थेस सामंतिक स्थितीत

रूपांतरित केले. सावकार व ठेकेदारांनी आदिवासींच्या शोषणाची सीमा पार केली होती. आदिवासी जमिनीचे मूळ मालक असूनही जमीनदार व सावकार जबरदस्तीने त्या जमिनीवर ताबा मिळवून बसले होते. पण त्याबद्दल चकार शब्दही न काढण्याचा आदेश इंग्रजांनी दिले होते, परंतु बिरसांना ते सहन झाले नाही. बिरसांनी लोकांमध्ये जागृती करण्यास सुरवात केली, ते लोकांना म्हणत कि "तुमच्या जमिनी धूळ वाऱ्यासारख्या उडून गेल्या आहेत, स्वभिमानासोबत तुमचा आत्मविश्वासही संपला आहे, जर तुम्ही तुमचा आत्मविश्वास परत जागृत नाही केला तर तुम्ही तुमच्या आया बहिणींची अब्रु कशी वाचवाल?" हे ऐकून लोकांच्या मनावर खोल परिणाम झाला, व त्या लोकांमध्ये आत्मविश्वास जागृत होण्यास सुरवात झाली.

**उलागुलान:**

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सन १८६९ मध्ये वन संरक्षण कायदा लागू करण्यात आला, त्यामुळे जंगलावर होणारी उपजीविका बंद झाली. आदिवासींवर मोठे संकट उभे राहिले. या अन्यायाविरुद्ध बिरासांनी १८९० मध्ये व्यापक क्रांती 'उलगुलान'ची घोषणा केली. शस्त्रबळ तयार करून शत्रूंना ठार केले. बिरासांनी १८९५ मध्ये समाजसुधारणेचे अभियान आपल्या हातात घेतले. जंगल, जमीन संपत्ती हा आमचा अधिकार आहे, ते आमच्या उपजीविकेचे साधन आहे, यासाठी सर्व आदिवासींनी एकत्र येवून लढायचे आवाहन केले. त्यांनी न्याय व अधिकारासाठी शस्त्र हाती घेतले. जंगल राज्याची घोषणा करून ते आदिवासींचे महानायक बनले. यामुळे इंग्रज सरकार त्यांच्या मागे लागले परंतु त्यांनी आपले कार्य चालूच ठेवले. बिरासांनी अनेक अनुयायी तयार केले. बिरसा व त्यांच्या अनुयायांनी अन्यायी सावकार व जमीनदारांच्या घरांना आग

लावून दिली. हि बातमी पोलिसांनी जिल्हाधिकाऱ्याला कळवताच बिरासांना अटक करण्याचे आदेश देण्यात आले. ९ ऑ. १८९५ ला बिरसा व त्यांच्या वडिलांनाही ताब्यात घेण्यात आले. आणि ख्रिस्ती पाद्रींच्या साक्षीवरून त्यांना २ वर्ष कारावास व ५० रु. दंड ठोठावण्यात आला.

३० नोव्हेंबर १८९७ रोजी बिरसा तुरुंगातून बाहेर आले , त्या वेळी आदिवासी समाजाची केविलवाणी स्थिती बघून ते पेटून उठले व त्यांनी स्वावलंबन व स्वाभिमानासाठी उलगुलान ची घोषणा केली. नवीन तरुणांचीही भरती झाली. यावर सरकारने पुन्हा त्यांच्या अटकेसाठी वॉरंट काढला, पण बिरसा मुंडा पकडला नाही. यावेळी सत्ता अधिकाराच्या उद्देशाने आंदोलन चळवळ पुढे सरकली. बिरसा हे उत्तम योद्धा होते, व एक कुशल प्रशासक होते. फेब्रु. १८९८ मध्ये बिरासांनी आपल्या

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अनुयायांच्या सोबत डुंबारी बुरुज या पर्वताच्या पायथ्याशी सभा बोलावली, व १८९९ मध्ये नाताळचा पहिलाच दिवस हल्ल्याचा दिवस म्हणून ठरवला. या हल्ल्यामध्ये त्यांनी पोलिस चौकी लुटायचे ठरवले. नाताळच्या रात्री आपल्या साथीदारांच्या तीन वेगवेगळ्या तुकड्या बनवून वेगवेगळ्या जागेवर हल्ले चढवले. सिंगभूम, चक्रधरपूर, रांची, खुंटी, कोरा, तामाड या प्रदेशांतील पोलीस चौक्या जाळण्यात आल्या. या मुक्ती आंदोलनाला मुंडारी भाषेत 'उलगुलान' असे म्हणतात. या आंदोलनात आदिवासींनी मोठ्या प्रमाणात सहभाग घेतला. फादरच्या घरावर हल्ले करून फादर कारवेरी व फादर हाफमान यांच्यावर बाण चालवले.

जानेवारी १९०० मध्ये रांचीच्या इंग्रज अधिकाऱ्यांना बिरासांच्या या हल्ल्याची माहिती मिळाली आणि इंग्रजांनी डुंबारी बुरुजावर गोळीबार सुरू

केला, तेव्हाच बिरासांचे अनुयायी त्यांच्या नावाचा जयजयकार करत धनुष्यबाण व दगडफेक करत त्यांचा प्रतिकार करण्यास सुरवात केली. त्यावेळी टेकडीवर २००० पेक्षा जास्त लोकांचा जमाव उपस्थित होता, यात स्त्रिया व लहान मुलांचाही समावेश होता. या नरसंहारात २०० पेक्षा जास्त आदिवासी मारले गेले, व बाकीच्यांना जबरदस्तीने ख्रिश्ती धर्म स्वीकारण्यात भाग पाडले गेले. हा नरसंहार 'डुंबारी बुरुज नरसंहार' म्हणून ओळखला जाऊ लागला. या नरसंहारानंतर ७ जानेवारी १९०० मध्ये पोलिसांनी धरपकड सुरू केली, व पुढे ३ फेब्रुवारी १९०० मध्ये बिरासांनी आपल्या ८० अनुयायांसमवेत स्वतःला पोलिसांच्या स्वाधीन केले. या वेळेस तेथे उपस्थित आदिवासी बांधवांना बिरासांनी माधारी फिरण्यास व आपल्या अधिकारांसाठी लढण्याचा उपदेश केला. त्यानंतर वयाच्या केवळ २५ व्या वर्षी तुरुंगवास भोगत

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असताना कॉलाराने ग्रस्त होवून बिरासांची प्राणज्योत मालवली. परंतु येथेही इंग्रजांचे कपट दिसून येते, बिरासांच्या अनुयायांच्या म्हणण्यानुसार बिरासांना तुरुंगात कॉलराच्या औषधाऐवजी विष देण्यात आले होते.

बिरासांना खात्री होती कि त्यांनी सुरवात केलेल्या उलगुलान नावाच्या वादळाचा कधीच अंत होणार नाही, बिरसा अमर आहेत व आपल्यासाठी आणि येणाऱ्या अनेक पिढ्यांसाठी आदर्श आहेत. बिरसाच्या 'उलगुलान' ला हि बिरसा इतकेच महत्त्व प्राप्त झाले, उलगुलान मध्ये समाजहीत तसेच मातृभूमीच्या रक्षणासाठी लढणे आदि तत्वे समाविष्ट आहेत, म्हणूनच लोक बिरासांना धरती आबा म्हणून संबोधतात. २५ वर्षांच्या अल्प कालावधीसाठी ते जगले तरी त्यांनी आदिवासींच्या मनोदशाला उत्तेजन दिले. त्यांना ब्रिटीश शासकांना दहशतवादाचा सामना करावा लागला.

त्याच्या मृत्यूनंतर चळवळीचा नाश झाला. तथापि, चळवळ किमान दोन मार्गांनी महत्त्वपूर्ण होती. सर्वप्रथम तो औपनिवेशिक सरकारला कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी करण्यास भाग पाडत असे जेणेकरून आदिवासींची जमीन दिक्कस (बाहेरील) द्वारे सहजपणे काढून घेतली जाऊ शकत नाही. दुसरे म्हणजे पुन्हा एकदा दाखवून दिले की आदिवासी लोकांना अन्यायविरोधी निषेध आणि औपनिवेशिक नियमांविरुद्धचा राग व्यक्त करण्याची क्षमता आली. त्यांनी त्यांच्या स्वतःच्या पद्धतीने आणि संघर्षांच्या चिन्हे शोधून काढू शकतील. बिरसा मुंडाच्या संघर्षामुळे झारखंडमध्ये छोटा नागपूर भाडेकरू कायदा- १९०८ (सीएनटी) अस्तित्वात आला जो आजही कायम आहे. या कायद्यात आदिवासींच्या आदिवासींच्या जमिनीचे हस्तांतरण करण्यास मनाई आहे आणि



त्याचबरोबर आदिवासींच्या मूलभूत अधिकारांचे संरक्षण होत.

### भारतीय आदिवासी धर्म:

लोकांमधील वाढत्या असंतोषाचा परिणाम आदिवासींच्या चालीरीतीवर आणि प्रथांवरही झाला आणि बिरसाने उत्पत्तीचा विचार करून ही चळवळ सुरू केली. लोक आमिषात पडतात. धर्माच्या ठिकाणी, कधीकधी आदिवासी मिशनरीच्या मोहात पडतात, तर कधीकधी फसवणूकीस देव मानले जाते. या समस्यांचे निराकरण केल्याशिवाय आदिवासी समाज चांगले काम करू शकत नाही, म्हणून त्यांनी एक उत्तम नायक आणि समाजसुधारकाची भूमिका निभावली. ब्रिटिश व शोषकांच्या विरोधातही संघर्ष चालूच होता. त्याला माहित होते की धर्माशिवाय सर्वाना सोबत घेणे सोपे होणार नाही. म्हणून बिरसाने सर्व धर्मांच्या चांगुलपणापासून काहीतरी आकर्षित केले आणि आपल्या

अनुयायांना त्याचे अनुसरण करण्यास प्रेरित केले. बिरसाने जुन्या अंधश्रद्धांचे खंडन केले. लोकांना हिंसा आणि अमली पदार्थापासून दूर राहण्याचा सल्ला दिला. त्यांच्या परिणाम असा झाला की ख्रिस्तीत्व स्वीकारणाऱ्या लोकांची संख्या झपाट्याने कमी होऊ लागली आणि जे मुंडा ख्रिश्चन झाले त्यांनी पुन्हा आपल्या जुन्या धर्माकडे परत जाऊ लागले. त्यांनी मुंडा समाजात धार्मिक आणि समाज सुधारणेचे कार्यक्रम सुरू केले आणि सर्व दुष्कर्मापासून मुक्त करण्याचे वचन दिले. बिरसानी सांस्कृतिक धर्मासाठी बोंगा (पूर्वज देवतांचा) पूजन करण्याचा आग्रह धरला. बिरसाने 'महाराणी राज टुंडू जनाओ अबुजा राजा अती जाना' (म्हणजे ब्रिटिश साम्राज्याचा राज्य संपले पाहिजे आणि आमचे राज्य स्थापन झाला पाहिजे) अशी घोषणा दिली. अशाप्रकारे बिरसाने आदिवासींना

स्वायत्तता दिली. बिरसा मुंडा यांनी आदिवासींना शोषणाच्या नरकयातनांपासून मुक्त करण्यासाठी तीन स्तरांवर संघटित करण्यास सुरवात केली. प्रथम, सामाजिक पातळीवर जेणेकरून आदिवासी समाज अंधश्रद्धेच्या आणि फसवणूकीच्या पकडातून बाहेर येऊ शकेल. यासाठी त्यांनी आदिवासींना स्वच्छतेचे संस्कार शिकविण्याचा प्रयत्न केला. त्यांना शिक्षणाचे महत्त्व सांगितले.

देवाच्या संदेशवाहक आणि नवीन धर्माचा संस्थापक होण्यासाठी बिरसाचा दावा मिशनऱ्यांसाठी अयोग्य ठरला. त्याच्या पंथातही ख्रिश्चन धर्म, मुख्यत्वे सरदार होते. त्याच्या कराराची सोपी व्यवस्था कर आकारणी करणार्या चर्चच्या विरोधात होती. एका देवतेच्या संकल्पनेने त्याच्या धर्माला व आर्थिक धर्माचे आरोग्य करणारा, चमत्कार करणारा—कार्यकर्ता आणि उपदेशाचा प्रसार करणारा लोक यांच्याकडे अपील

केले. समकालीन आणि नंतरचे लोक गाणे, त्यांच्या लोक, त्यांच्या आनंद आणि अपेक्षा यामध्ये बिरसाचा प्रचंड प्रभाव दर्शवित आहेत. धर्ती आबाचे नाव प्रत्येकाच्या ओठांवर होते. सदाणीतील लोक गीताने दर्शविले की जाति हिंदू आणि मुसलमानांच्या मार्गावर केलेला पहिला प्रभाव देखील नव्या धर्माच्या धर्माकडे आला. बिरसा मुंडा यांनी आदिवासी लोकांना त्यांच्या मूळ पारंपरिक आदिवासी धार्मिक व्यवस्थेचा पाठपुरावा करण्यास सल्ला दिला. त्याच्या शिकवणींनी प्रभावित होऊन आदिवासी लोकांना तो एक संदेश बनला आणि त्यांनी त्यांचे आशीर्वाद मागितले.

**भारतीय आदिवासी यांच्या लोकप्रिय संस्कृती:**

बिरसांना शिक्षणाबरोबरच संगीत, नृत्य यांची सुद्धा आवड होती. त्याचबरोबर उत्तम बासुरी वाजवायचे, त्यांचा आवाज भारदस्त

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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होता. पुढे हाच आवाज आदिवासींच्या अन्यायाविरुद्ध उठला. बासरी व टुईला वाजविणे, नृत्य, नकला, चित्र रेखाटणे, आखाड्यात जाणे इत्यादी छंदही त्यांच्या अंगी होते. बिरसा मुंडा म्हणाले की - "आपण आपली मूळ आदिवासी संस्कृती विसरू नये. ज्यामध्ये बरीच अजूनही लोकगीते आणि वांशिक साहित्यात जिवंत आहेत. बिरसा मुंडा १५ नोव्हेंबरला होणार्या त्यांच्या जयंतीचा अद्यापही कर्नाटकातील म्हैसूर आणि कोडागू जिल्हेपर्यंत आदिवासी लोकांचा उत्सव साजरा केला जातो, आणि झारखंडच्या कोकर रांची येथे समाधीस्थळ येथे अधिकृत कार्य केले जाते. २००८ मध्ये, बिरसाच्या जीवनावर आधारीत हिंदी चित्रपट, गांधी से पेहेल गांधी यांना त्याच नावाने त्यांच्या कादंबरीवर आधारित इक्बाल दुर्रान यांनी निर्देशित केले होते. आणखी एक हिंदी चित्रपट, "उलून-एक क्रांती (द क्रांती)" २००४

मध्ये अशोक सरन यांनी तयार केली, ज्यामध्ये ५०० बिरसाईट्स किंवा बिरसाच्या अनुयायांनी अभिनय केला. आज त्याच्या नावावर अनेक संस्था, संस्था व संरचना आहेत, विशेषतः बिरसा मुंडा विमानतळ रांची, बिरसा इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ टेक्नॉलॉजी सिंधरी, बिरसा मुंडा वानवासी विद्यार्थीभवन, कानपूर, सिद्धो कान्हो बिर्षा विद्यापीठ, पुरुलिया आणि बिरसा कृषी विद्यापीठ. बिहार रेजिमेंटचे युद्ध रोख म्हणजे बिरसा मुंडा की जय (बिरसा मुंडाचा विजय). आजही या महान व्यक्तीच्या पवित्र स्मृती झारखंड राज्यात आहेत. झारखंड राज्याने रांची विमानतळ व रेल्वे स्थानकाला 'बिरसा मुंडा' हे नाव देवून त्यांच्या महान कार्याला गौरविले आहे.

## सारांश:

एकोणिसाव्या शतकाच्या उत्तरार्धात भारतीय आदिवासी समाजाची आणि झारखंड तसेच

# Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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भारतातील क्रांतिकारक विचारसरणीने सामाजिक आणि राजकीय युगाच्या नव्या रचनेकडे जाणारे नायक म्हणून बिरसा मुंडा हे भारतीय इतिहासात अजरामर झाले आहेत. १९ व्या शतकात बिरसा मुंडा हे भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य चळवळीच्या इतिहासातील एक प्रमुख दुवा असल्याचे सिद्ध झाले आणि ते एक प्रमुख आदिवासी जननेते होते. आदिवासींचे जीवन, ओळख आणि अस्तित्व वाचविण्यासाठी त्यांनी दीर्घ आणि कठोर संघर्ष केला. बिरसाचे विचार मुंडा व संपूर्ण आदिवासी समाजाला संघर्षाचा मार्ग दाखवत राहिले. केवळ प्रेरणाच नाही, तर बिरसाचे विचार मुंडा व संपूर्ण आदिवासी समाजाला संघर्षाचा मार्ग दाखवत राहिले. बिरसा यांनी म्हटल्याप्रमाणे माणसाला ठार मारता येते, विचारांना नव्हे. आणि आज ब्रिटीशांच्या अंताच्या सत्तर वर्षांनंतरही बिरसा लोकांमध्ये जिवंत आहे व आजही बिरसा हे आदिवासींसाठी सर्वात मोठे स्थान आहे.

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## आदिवासी कवितेतून बिरसा मुंडा यांचे आलेले क्रांतिकारी चित्रण : एक आकलन

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### प्रस्तावना:

या संदर्भात डॉ. विनायक तुमराम

आदिवासी साहित्य हे जीवनवादी साहित्य आहे. आदिवासींच्या सर्वांगीण उत्थानाचा प्रश्न घेऊन हे साहित्य प्रस्थापित समाजव्यवस्थेला हाक मारू लागले आहे. सोबतच आदिवासींच्या सामाजिक बांधणीचा आणि एकात्म जीवनाचा विचारही ते मांडू लागले आहे. वर्णरहित, जातीरहित समाजव्यवस्था आदिवासी समूहांमध्ये नांदावी हा बिरसा मुंडा यांचा आदर्श घेऊन आदिवासी साहित्याचे स्वप्न सत्यात उमटू लागले. जी आदिवासी जीवनमूल्य कधी नव्हतीच त्यांचा स्वीकार हे साहित्य कदापि करणार नाही. म्हणून आदिवासी साहित्य हे व्यापक स्वरूपाचे साहित्य आहे.

म्हणतात की, “आदिवासींचे घायाळ आयुष्य ज्या संस्कृतीच्या कुसाआड राहिले, त्या संस्कृतीच्या प्राचीन इतिहासाला कुळारंभ देणारे हे साहित्य आहे. आदिवासी साहित्य हे या भूमीने प्रसविलेल्या आदिम वेदनेचे, जाणिवेचे शब्दरूप होय.”<sup>१</sup> म्हणजेच आदिवासी साहित्याच्या रूपाने नवा विद्रोह दिवसागणिक आकारत आहे. वनवासमुक्तीचा नवा संकल्प आदिवासी साहित्याच्या रूपाने मानवाच्या मनामनात दृढावत आहे. आदिवासी भारताच्या नवनिर्माणाची स्वप्नबीजे आदिवासी साहित्याच्या रूपाने अंकुरित होऊ लागली आहेत. यासंदर्भात डॉ. विनायक तुमराम लिहितात की, “पहाडांच्या कुसाकुसात

आणि काटेरी झुडपांच्या वस्त्या-वस्त्यांत ज्यांच्या आयुष्याचा प्रत्येक क्षण बेडीबंद झाला अशा आरण्यकांना मुक्तीचा दिलासा देणारे हे साहित्य होय.”<sup>२</sup> म्हणजेच अनेक आदिवासी कवींनी बिरसा मुंडा यांना आपला आदर्श मानून बिरसा मुंडांची क्रांतिकारक भाषा आपल्या शब्दांतून साकार केली आहे. वर्णव्यवस्थेशी निर्णायक युद्ध मांडणारे हे साहित्य आदिवासींच्या सर्व तक्रारी सोबत घेऊन युगप्रवासाला निघाले आहे. या साहित्यात वेदना, विद्रोह आणि अभिनिवेशही आहे. प्राचार्य राम शेवाळकर यांनी आदिवासी साहित्यासंबंधी मार्मिकपणे विवेचन केले आहे. ते म्हणतात की, “आजचे आदिवासी साहित्य हे या नव्या प्रबोधनाचे उषासुक्त आहे.”<sup>३</sup> म्हणजेच आदिवासी जीवन हे अनेक कलाकुसरींनी युक्त आहे, तसेच आदिवासींच्या चळवळींना संघर्षाच्या विविध छटा आहेत. आदिवासी आणि काव्य यांचा फार जवळचा संबंध आहे. आदिवासी सर्वात प्रथम बोलला तो

काव्यातूनच. जीवनात येणाऱ्या विविध प्रसंगांना धैर्याने तोंड देतानाच त्याच्या तोंडून काव्यही तेवढ्याच सहजतेने बाहेर पडले. हेच काव्य बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या क्रांतिकारक नेतृत्वाची ग्वाही देऊ लागले.

**बिरसा मुंडा यांचे व्यक्तित्व आणि कर्तृत्व:**

बिरसा मुंडा यांचा जन्म झारखंडमधील उलिहातु या गावी १५ नोव्हेंबर १८७५ रोजी झाला. त्यांचे शिक्षण जर्मन मिशनरी स्कूलमध्ये झाले. सगळ्यांमध्ये मिळून-मिसळून राहण्याचा बिरसा मुंडा यांचा स्वभाव होता. त्यामुळे तरुणवयात त्यांनी समवयस्क आणि समविचारी सहकार्यांचे संघटन केले. बिरसांना आपल्या वडिलांचे सुगन मुंडांचे जबरदस्तीने धर्मांतरण केल्याबद्दल ख्रिस्ती मिशनर्यांचा व इंग्रजांचा मनस्वी राग येत असे. त्यातच अशिक्षित आदिवासींवर इंग्रजांकडून होणारा अत्याचार पाहून इंग्रज अधिकार्यांना धडा शिकवण्याचा विचार त्यांनी केला. बिरसा

मुंडा यांनी गोडगंडा गावातील स्वामी आनंद पांडे यांना गुरूस्थानी मानले होते. त्यांच्या आशीर्वादाने आणि त्यांच्या सहकार्यांच्या बळावर इंग्रज सरकारच्या अन्यायाविरोधात बिरसा मुंडांनी छोटा नागपूर क्षेत्रात इ.स. १८९५ ला लढा उभारला.

यासंदर्भात सुरेशकुमार सिंह म्हणतात की, “छोटा नागपूरच्या अरण्यावरील आपला पूर्वजांपासून पिढीजात अधिकार मिळावा यासाठी व्यक्तिसापेक्ष सर्वस्वाचा व सुखाचा त्याग करून समाजसापेक्ष दृष्टिकोनातून बिरसा मुंडा बंडखोर होऊन आदिवासी स्वातंत्र्यासाठी जीवन समर्पित करतात. कारण अरण्य, जंगल वनभूमी ही मुंडांची माता आहे. बिरसाच्या पूर्वजांपासून शिकार करणे, गुराखीपण, जंगलावर उदरनिर्वाह भागविणे हे परंपरागत बिरसा मुंडांचे जिणे होते. जंगलावर इंग्रजांनी आक्रमण केले. आदिवासींना त्यांच्या मूळ निवासापासून दूर लोटले.”<sup>४</sup> म्हणजेच बिरसा मुंडांच्या

जनविद्रोहामध्ये ब्रिटिश शासन सत्ता, या सत्तेचा अधिकारी वर्ग, न्याय प्रणालीतील अधिकारी वर्ग, सरंजाम, जमीनदार हे सर्व मुंडा जमातीचं शोषण करण्याच्या रूपात उभे राहतात. या सर्वांकडून मुंडा जमातीचे शोषण होते.

मुंडा जमातीच्या भूक, दारिद्र्य, उपासमार, वेढबिगार, पोलीस अत्याचार, न्याय व्यवस्थेची असहिष्णू वृत्ती या सर्वांच्या विरोधात बिरसा मुंडा यांचा जनलढा होता. याचसाठी त्यांनी ‘ऊलगुलान’ ची हाक दिलेली होती. हे कार्य करताना इंग्रजांनी त्यांना अटक केली व तुरुंगात अतोनात छळ केला. ९ जून १९०० रोजी बिरसा मुंडा यांचा रांची कारागृहात मृत्यू झाला. बिरसा मुंडा यांना लोकांनी जननायक हा किताब बहाल केला आहे. आदिवासींवर होत असलेल्या इंग्रजांच्या दडपणाविरुद्ध बिरसा मुंडा यांनी जो लढा लढविला त्यामुळे त्यांना हा मान मिळाला आहे.

आदिवासी कवितेतून बिरसा मुंडा यांचे  
आलेले क्रांतिकारी चित्रण:

बिरसा मुंडांच्या बंडखोर, ध्येयवेडा,  
जिद्दी, प्रखर, तेजस्वी, स्वाभिमानी  
व्यक्तिमत्त्वाबरोबरच मुंडा जमातीचा  
भूतकालीन इतिहास परंपरा सांस्कृतिक व  
ऐतिहासिक वैभव कवितेतून साकार  
झालेले आहे. यासंदर्भात कवयित्री  
उषाकिरण आत्राम म्हणतात की,

“बिरसा तू एकदा ये रे बाबा  
आम्हा आदिम मायांच्या कुशीत  
जन्माला पुन्हा एकदा होऊ दे!  
ऊलगुलान  
ही रानाची सय-जळून राख झाली  
रे”<sup>५</sup>

याचा अर्थ असा की आदिवासी  
क्रांतिकारकांबद्दलचा अभिमान या  
कवितेतून अपरिहार्यपणे प्रकटतो.  
कवयित्रीला वाटते की, बिरसा मुंडाने  
आपल्या कुशीत पुन्हा जन्म घ्यावा.  
बिरसा मुंडाच्या ऊलगुलान या घोषणेचा

पुन्हा एकदा नाद घुमला पाहिजे असे  
उषाकिरण आत्राम यांना वाटते.

भुजंग मेश्रामांच्या काव्यात  
येणाऱ्या प्राक्कथा अगदी सहजतेने येतात.  
‘भेटलेल्या कविता’ या कवितेत कवीने  
एका शाळकरी मुलाचे मनोगत मांडले  
आहे. गुरुजी मुलाला तीन माणसांची  
ओळख आपणास सांगतात तेव्हा तो  
मुलगा म्हणतो,

“गुरुजींनी विचारलं  
कोणत्याही तीन आदिवासी गावांची  
नावे सांग म्हणून सांगलं,  
चुकलं असलं तर तोंडातच मार  
पर सांग, औतानासिवा खुलते का  
कवाड? मी फक्त सांगलं.  
शेलटी, वरुड, कोडपाखिंडी  
गुरुजींनी विचारलं, कशासाठी  
प्रसिद्ध आहेत ही गावं?  
मी फक्त सांगलं, ‘शेलाटीची होळी,  
वरुडची गोवारीन बाई  
कोडपाखिंडीच्या कापसाची चोरी’  
गुरुजी गरजले, हात परजले



दोन चार मेंदीचे फोक मोडले  
'कोणत्याही तीन माणसांची  
ओळख  
आणल्याशिवाय तुला शाळेत  
प्रवेश नाही.'  
तवा मी बिसा काका, तंट्या नाना,  
आन् अंबरसिंग म्हाराजाची ओळख  
काढली.'<sup>६</sup>

कवी आधुनिक काळात इतिहासातील  
महापुरुषांची ओळख काढणे महत्वाचे  
मानतो. या प्रत्येक महापुरुषाशी कवीचे  
फार जवळचे नाते आहे. कवीने या  
महापुरुषांची नवी ओळख शोधली आहे. 'बिरसा मुंडा' या कवितेत भुजंग मेश्राम  
बिरसा मुंडा हा अजून क्रांतिकारक व  
इतिहासपुरुष आजही आदिवासींच्या मनात  
जिवंत असल्याचे सांगतात. या संदर्भात  
भुजंग मेश्राम म्हणतात की,

“लोक तुझी वाट पाहत आहेत  
ज्या खडतर वाटेने तू निघून  
गेलास ती पायवाट

आजचा राजमार्ग झालाय तुझ्या  
आठवणींसारखाच  
नागड्या रात्री दहशतीचे साम्राज्य  
असतानाही.”<sup>७</sup>

म्हणजेच कवी भुजंग मेश्रामांनी आपल्या  
काव्यसंग्रहाचे शीर्षक उलगुलान असे  
ठेवले आहे. हा शब्द बिरसा मुंडांनी  
केलेली एकेकाळची घोषणा आहे. बिरसा  
मुंडा कवीला वेगवेगळ्या रूपात भेटतो.  
कवी त्यांच्याशी संवाद करतो.

वसंत कनाळे 'बिरसा' या  
कवितेत म्हणतात की,

“भिम भिमालापेन बिरसा ।  
वादळी तुफान तू बिरसा ।  
सत्याचा लढा तू बिरसा  
मुक्तीचा मार्ग तू बिरसा”<sup>८</sup>

म्हणजेच बिरसा मुंडाचा उल्लेख एक  
वादळी व्यक्तिमत्व, क्रांतिकारक अशा  
स्वरूपात कवी करतात. अन्यायाला वाचा  
फोडणारा वादळासारखा आदिवासी  
इतिहासपुरुष म्हणून बिरसा मुंडाचा  
उल्लेख करतात. बिरसा मुंडाच्या कार्याचा

गौरव करतात. पुढे वसंत कनाळे  
लिहितात की,

“पिंपळाच्या खाली विद्या साधली  
गौतमा

आदिवासींचा पिंपळ तिथे मुंजे  
होती जमा ।

सालईचा वृक्ष जिथे गौतम  
जन्मला

आदिवासींच्या लग्नात म्हणून मुंडा  
आणिला

आदिम-गौतम असा घनिष्ठ संबंध  
एक एकतेचा आहे असा  
सांस्कृतिक बंध”<sup>९</sup>

म्हणजेच कवी वसंत कनाळे हे गौतम  
बुद्ध आणि बिरसा मुंडा यांचा घनिष्ठ  
संबंध प्रस्थापित करून दाखवतात. ज्या  
पद्धतीने सर्वसामान्याला माणूस व  
मानवतावादी दृष्टिकोन गौतम बुद्धांनी  
दाखविला त्याचप्रमाणे बिरसा मुंडाने  
आदिवासी समाजाला स्वाभिमान  
शिकविला त्याचप्रमाणे संघटन करून  
इंग्रजांच्या विरोधी बंड करण्यास एक

पलटणच उभी केली होती. कारण हे इंग्रज  
सरकार जंगलाचा कायदा करून मूळ  
निवासी आदिवासी यांनाच बेघर करू  
लागले. ज्या पद्धतीने गौतम बुद्ध  
म्हणतात तुम्हीच तुमच्या जीवनाचे  
शिल्पकार आहात ही भूमिका बिरसा मुंडा  
यांची होती.

आदिवासी समाजाचे आणि बिरसा  
मुंडा यांचे क्रांतिकारक भावनिक नाते  
आहे. यासंदर्भात भुजंग मेश्राम ‘बिरसा  
मुंडा’ या कवितेचे भावनिक होऊन बिरसा  
मुंडाला शोधू लागतात. ते लिहितात,

“आईला पहाटेच जात्यावर तुझी  
गाणी गाताना

मी ऐकत असतो डोळे मिटून

डोंगर उतरणीवर बाया रेलों रेलोंची

तुला घालतात शपथ ती ही

डोळ्यांमध्ये घेतो बांधून”<sup>१०</sup>

म्हणजेच भुजंग मेश्राम बिरसा मुंडाला  
शोधत असताना आपल्या बालपणातील  
आठवणीत जातात. या आठवणी  
काव्यबद्ध करत असताना त्यांच्या

कवितेची भाषा अधिक संवेदनशीलपणे व्यक्त होते. वाचकाच्या मनाला थेट भिडते. अनेक आदिवासी कवींच्या कवितेत कधी बालपण, आपले गाव, माय, बाप, जुने सवंगडी शोधत असताना या कवितेची भाषा कातर बनत जाते. परंतु बिरसा मुंडाचे कार्यकर्तृत्व एवढे महत्त्वपूर्ण होते की, बिरसा मुंडा हा जात्यावर दळणाऱ्या मातांचा आशा किरण बनला होता. प्रत्येक आदिवासी माता आपल्या मुलामध्ये बिरसा पाहत असते.

बिरसा मुंडा या क्रांतिकारकाचे आदिवासी कवितेच्या क्षेत्रातील पहिल्या पिढीतील आघाडीच्या कवयित्री उषाकिरण आत्राम यांनी वर्तमानातील स्मरण केले आहे. आजच्या वर्तमानातील आदिवासी स्त्रियांचा छळ, आदिम समाजाच्या व्यथा, वेदना, दुःख, भय यातून मुक्तता करण्यासाठी बिरसा मुंडा याने पुन्हा रूप धारण करावे. बिरसाचा 'ऊलगुलान' पुन्हा सुरू होण्याची ही विनवणी करताना उषाकिरण आत्राम म्हणतात की,

“घेऊन ये रे बाबा -

क्रांतीचा नवा रेलास ठेमसा

आणि पहाट गर्भातून सूर्य

येण्याआधीच तोड सारी साखळदंड

- आणि करून टाक मोकळ

बिरसा! म्हणूनच ये रे आमचा

नवा आशादीप होऊन!”<sup>११</sup>

म्हणजेच आदिवासी समाजावर वर्तमानकाळात देखील अन्याय होतो आहे.

हा अन्याय दूर करण्यासाठी कवयित्री या कवितेच्या माध्यमातून बिरसा पुन्हा यावा

हा आशावाद व्यक्त करित आहे.

आदिवासींच्या शोषणमुक्त, भयमुक्त

समाजरचनेसाठी बिरसा मुंडा यांनी

आशादीप होऊन यावे.

कावेबाज प्रस्थापित व्यवस्थेने

महात्मा गौतम बुद्धाला दशावतारांपैकी

एक अवतार मानला आहे. राम, कृष्ण,

वराह, मत्स्य, वामन या अवतार मालिकेत

बुद्धाला अवतार मानला गेल्यामुळे

चातुर्वर्णाची चौकट मानण्यासाठी

आदिवासींची संस्कृती आहे. या

संस्कृतीमध्ये समता, बंधुता, न्याय या तत्वांना केंद्रस्थानी ठेवले आहे. भुजंग मेश्राम हे आपल्या 'बिरसा मुंडा' या कवितेत ऊलगुलान ची घोषणा करतात. ऊलगुलान म्हणजे सर्व पातळीवर एकाच वेळी उठाव करा. आदिवासी क्रांतिकारक बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या कृती कार्यक्रमाची घोषणा म्हणजे ऊलगुलान होय. बिरसा मुंडा या कवितेत भुजंग मेश्राम म्हणतात की,

“आहे फक्त अरण्यात वाढणारा  
असंतोष अन् ओठांवर तूच दिलेलं  
छोटं गीत  
ऊलगुलान! ऊलगुलान! ऊलगुलान!  
जे आता बनलं आहे सांस्कृतिक  
आंदोलन”<sup>१२</sup>

म्हणजेच आज आदिवासी समाजाची हक्काची उत्पादन साधने शासन, व्यवस्था आपल्या ताब्यात घेत आहे. आदिवासींच्या जीवनातील प्रश्न, समस्या जीवघेण्या होत आहे. आदिवासी युवकांमध्ये संघर्ष करण्याचे मनोबल वाढत आहे. या

युवकांना आपल्या इतिहासातील महानायक क्रांतिकारक बिरसा मुंडा यांची आठवण होत आहे. त्यांच्या 'ऊलगुलान' या घोषणेचा उपयोग प्रस्थापित व्यवस्थेला शह देण्यासाठी करण्याच्या तयारीत आदिवासी तरुण आहे. वर्तमान परिस्थितीमध्ये आदिवासी समाजामध्ये एक सांस्कृतिक, सामाजिक व राजकीय आंदोलन उभे राहिले आहे. आपल्या हक्कांसाठी, अधिकारांसाठी आदिवासी समाज जागृत होत आहे. आपल्या इतिहासाचे स्मरण करून आपली अस्मिता जागृत करण्याचे कार्य बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या इतिहासाच्या पुनर्वाचनामुळे शक्य होत आहे.

### समारोप :

नागरी आणि ग्रामीण समाजापासून सर्वथा दूर असलेला अवर्ण समाज आदिवासी समाज आहे. निबीड अरण्यात आदिमतेचे जीवन जगणाऱ्या आदिवासींना स्वातंत्र्याचा लाभ झाला नाही. स्वातंत्र्यानंतर आपले जीवन

सुखकर होईल म्हणून स्वातंत्र्याच्या आंदोलनात आदिवासी समाज मोठ्या संख्येने आंदोलनात होता. ब्रिटिशांच्या गुलामगिरीविरुद्धच्या युद्धात आदिवासी उतरला होता. आदिवासी समाजाने देखील या स्वातंत्र्याच्या इतिहासात आपले महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान दिले आहे.

भगवान बिरसा मुंडाच्या प्रेरक इतिहासाने त्याला हा इतिहास घडवायला, शूरत्व गाजवायला भारतीय समाजाबरोबर जायला आणि सामुदायिक विवेकाने संघर्षसिद्ध व्हायला दिशा दिली होती. निसर्गदत्त संस्कृतीच्या वारशाला कर्तृत्ववान इतिहास जोडला गेला. पारंपरिक अभौतिक संस्कृतीचे समृद्ध ज्ञान असलेला आदिवासी समाज

स्वातंत्र्यानंतर प्रामाणिक अशा आकांक्षा ठेवून होता. झाले उलटेच. त्यांचा इतिहास जाणीवपूर्वक बाजूला ठेवला. त्यांची संस्कृती मागास ठरविली. स्वातंत्र्यानंतरच्या स्वार्थी अहंकारी व्यवस्थेने त्यांची पिळवणूक-फसवणूक करित कमालीचे शोषण केले. अन्याय, वेढबिगारी आणि दमन यांचे बळी ठरविले. याविरुद्ध सातत्याने बिरसा मुंडा यांनी संघर्ष व बंड केले होते. म्हणूनच अतदीपभव याप्रमाणे आपणच आपल्या प्रकाशाचे दीप व्हावे असा विश्वास आदिवासी कवीने बिरसा मुंडाचे क्रांतिकारी चित्रण करून वाचकांना अंतर्मुख केले आहे.

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## बिरसा मुंडा क्रांतीकारी महानायकाचे कार्य

डॉ. कविता मुरारीलाल राजाभोज

मराठी विभाग प्रमुख

एस.एस.गल्स कॉलेज, गोंदिया.(महाराष्ट्र)

अंसारी वार्ड, विठ्ठल नगर, गोंदिया

### प्रस्तावना:

“तुम्ही विश्वास ठेवा अंधाराला अंत

असतो सूर्यरथ घेऊन येणारा  
कुणीतरी संत असतो”

आदिवासी समाजाकरीता सूर्यरथ घेऊन  
येणारा हा बिहारच्या झारखंडामधील  
उगवलेला क्रांतीसूर्य म्हणजे बिरसा मुंडा  
होय. भारताच्या स्वातंत्र्यलढ्यात  
आदिवासींचे ठामपणे नेतृत्व करून  
वयाच्या अवघ्या 25 व्या वर्षी शहीद  
होऊन इतिहासात अजरामर होणारा शूर  
योद्धा म्हणून सामान्य लोकांना त्यांचा  
परिचय आहे तर आदिवासींकरीता  
ईश्वराचा अंश म्हणून पूज्यनीय आहे.  
उलगुलान चे रणशींग फुंकणारे, इंग्रजांच्या  
दडपशाहीविरोधात आदिवासींच्या वनहक्क  
आणि स्वातंत्र्याकरीता लढत लढत प्राण

त्यागणारे बिरसा मुंडा जिवट असे  
क्रांतिकारी होते.

**बिरसा मुंडा यांचे बालपण आणि धर्म  
परीवर्तन:**

भारताच्या बिहार राज्यातील रांची जिल्हा  
नैसर्गिक संपत्ती, जंगलसंपत्तीने संपन्न  
असून पृथ्वीच्या पोटात अनेक खनिजेही  
साठवलेली आहेत. अशाच रांची पासून  
60 कि.मी. दूर दक्षिण-पूर्व भागातील  
उलिहातू नावाच्या गावात मुंडा कुटुंब  
राहत असे. सुगणा मुंडा आणि करमी  
मुंडा या दांपत्यांना कामता नावाचा मुलगा  
आणि दसकीर व चंपा नावाच्या दोन मुली  
असून चवथे अपत्य म्हणजे बिरसा मुंडा  
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बिरसा यांचा जन्म झाला. गुरुवारला  
हिंदीमध्ये बृहस्पतिवार म्हणतात, मुलाचा  
जन्म बृहस्पतिवारला झाला म्हणून बिरसा

हे नाव ठेवले. पुढे हेच नाव आदिवासींच्या जीवनाचा प्रकाशसूर्य बनले. सुगणा आणि करमी यांना पुन्हा पुत्र प्राप्ती झाली आणि कुटुंब पूर्ण झाले तीन मुलं आणि दोन मुली अशा सप्तकोनी कुटुंबात बिरसा हे अंत्यत चाणाक्ष आणि तेजस्वी होते.

## आदिवासी समूहाच्या मनातील विद्रोह:

ख्रिस्ती धर्मप्रसारक आदिवासींना त्यांच्या जमीनीची लालूच दाखवून ख्रिश्चन धर्म स्विकारायला भाग पाडत होते. काही आदिवासींनी धर्मबदलाला विरोध करून एकत्र येण्याचा निर्धार केला. चाउबासा येथील मिशनरी शाळेत झालेल्या सभेत ख्रिश्चन पादरीने भारतीय व आदिवासी प्रथा-परंपराना चूकीचे ठरवून आदिवासी समाजाला असभ्य म्हणून अवमान केल्यामुळे बिरसाने उठून अत्यंत कठोर, इंग्रज व ख्रिश्चन विरोधी भाषण करून आवाहन दिले. मुख्य पादरी लूथरन यांनी बिरसाला समजवण्याचा प्रयत्न केला पण विद्रोहाची ठिणगी पेटली होती. बिरसा आपल्या विचारांना मागे घेणारे नव्हतेच

परिणामी त्यांना शाळेतून काढण्यात आले. इथच बिरसाचे शिक्षण संपले.

अर्धवट शिक्षणाला राम राम ठोकून बिरसांनी आपल्या गावाला जवळ केले त्यांच्या जाईपर्यंत इंग्रजांच्या विरोधात बिरसाने केलेल्या भाषणाची किर्ती पोहचली होती. अशातच जवळच्या बंदगावातील आनंद पांडे या व्यक्तीचा परिचय झाला. हिंदू धर्म वेद, पुराण, उपनिषद्, रामायण, महाभारत, भगवद्गीता इत्यादी विविध धार्मिक आणि सिध्दांतांची माहिती आनंद पांडे यांना होती. बिरसा त्यांच्या सोबत हिंदू धर्माच्या अनेक मुद्द्यांवर गहन चर्चा करीत. त्यांच्याच मार्गदर्शनाखाली बिरसांनी हिंदू धर्मग्रंथांच्या अध्ययनाला सुरुवात केली.

## हिंदू धर्मात प्रवेश:

आनंद पांडे आणि त्यांचे भाऊ सुखनाथ पांडे यांच्या सान्निध्यात हिंदू धर्माचे सखोल अध्ययन करून त्यांच्या लक्षात आले की ख्रिश्चन धर्म आणि हिंदू धर्मात जरी ईश्वरीय ज्ञान, आध्यात्मिकता



यांचा संदेश समान असला तरी कोणत्याही आजाराला वेगवेगळ्या धर्मपरीवर्तनासारखी कोणतीही गोष्ट हिंदू धर्मात नाही. हिंदू धर्मातही इतर धर्मासारखे दया, परोपकार, क्षमा, शांती, प्रामाणिकता, नैतिकता आणि सत्यतत्वावर मानवी जीवन आधारीत आहे. अशा अनेक मुद्द्यांमुळे बिरसा हिंदू धर्माकडे आकर्षित झाले. त्यांना ख्रिश्चन धर्मापेक्षा हिंदू धर्म अत्यंत उपयुक्त आणि महत्वाचा वाटला. महाभारताची शिकवण, गीतेचा उपदेश या सर्वांच्या प्रभावामुळे बिरसांनी पुन्हा हिंदू धर्माचा स्विकार केला. हिंदू धर्म स्विकारल्यानंतर त्यांनी एकांतवासात चार वर्षे तपस्या केली. या काळात त्यांची वेशभूषा, आचार-विचार सर्वात अंतर्बाह्य बदल झाला. अंगात पीतांबर आणि पायात खडाउ आल्या. लोक त्यांना आता महात्मा बिरसा म्हणू लागले.

### पंथाची स्थापना:

बिरसा मुंडाची ओळख आता एका वैद्यायाच्या रूपात झाली होती कारण

कोणत्याही आजाराला वेगवेगळ्या वनस्पती च्या उपचाराद्वारे नष्ट करू लागले. उपचारासोबतच उपदेश देण्याचे कार्य बिरसा करत होते. दिवसेंदिवस लोकांची संख्या वाढत होती. आदिवासी समुदायाच्या विकासाकरीता एक नव्या पंथाची स्थापना केली. जून्या जाचक रूढी, पंरपरा नष्ट करून हिंदू धर्मातील आणि ख्रिश्चन धर्मातील विकास करणाऱ्या पंरपरांचे अनुकरण या पंथात होऊ लागले. आदिवासी समाजात गोवध निषिद्ध ठरवून फक्त सिंगबोगा म्हणजे एकेश्वरवाद स्विकारला. बळीप्रथा नष्ट केली, स्वच्छतेचा पुरस्कार केला तसेच यज्ञोपवित धारण करण्याचा उपदेश केला. एकंदरीत हिंदू धर्मातील उच्च भावनांचा स्विकार या “बिरसैत” पंथात करायला लावला.

बिरसाचे हे सर्व आचरण ख्रिश्चन धर्माला आणि धर्मप्रचाराला आळा घालणारे होते इंग्रज आणि धर्म प्रचारक हे वेगवेगळे नसून एकाच नाण्याच्या दोन

बाजू आहेत हे बिरसाला केव्हाच कळले होते. म्हणून त्यांनी ख्रिश्चन धर्माविरुद्ध ही धार्मिक चळवळ सुरू केली होती. ख्रिश्चन धर्म प्रचारकांना विरसाचे हे कार्य म्हणजे धर्मप्रचारात खूप मोठी अडचण वाटली म्हणूनच त्यांनी बिरसाला विरोध करण्याकरीता जमीन मालकांची मदत घेतली.

### आंदोलनाची सुरुवात:

धार्मिक आंदोलनाने हळूहळू राजकीय आंदोलनाचे रूप धारण केले. धर्मसुधारणेसोबतच समाजसुधारणा असे रूप ही चळवळ घेऊ लागली. कितीतरी मुंडा सरदार एकत्र येऊन या आंदोलनाला आपल्या अधिकाराचे, आत्मनिर्भरतेचे, गुलामीतून सुटका प्राप्त करण्याचे आंदोलन बनवून “सरदार आंदोलन” असे नाव दिले. आदिवासी समाजातील उपासमार, गरीबी, बेरोजगारी, अज्ञान हे सर्व नष्ट करून आदिवासी समूहाला पुढे आणण्याकरीता बिरसा समाजाला जागृत करू लागले. विविध सभांमध्ये मार्गदर्शन

करत असता त्यांच्या वाणीला उग्र रूप येत होते. या सभांमध्ये आदिवासी सैनिक सहभागी होत असत. भूधारक, इंग्रज, धर्मप्रचारक-प्रसारक, आणि वनसंरक्षक कायदा या सर्वांच्या विरोधात बिरसाच्या नेतृत्वात हे आंदोलन अधिकाधिक तीव्र होऊ लागले. या आंदोलनाकरीता बिरसा मुंडानी काही नियम बनवून आचार संहिता बनवली. या नियमांमध्ये शोषण करणाऱ्या प्रत्येक घटकाचा विरोध, ब्रिटीश शासनाच्या आदिवासी विरोधी नीतीवर बहिष्कार, आदिवासी वीरांच्या गाथांचे प्रसार प्रचार, 30 जून 1855 या दिवसाचा शहीद दिवस म्हणून गौरव करण्यात यावा. या दिवशी 30 हजार आदिवासी ‘जमीर आंदोलनात’ मृत्यूमुखी पडले होते. यात पुरुषच नव्हे तर आदिवासी स्त्रियांनीही भाग घेतला होता. या दिवसाला ‘स्वर्ण रेखा’ दिवसही म्हणतात. 1890 पासून सुरू झालेले हे आंदोलन पुढे ब्रिटीश दडपशाही आणि धार्मिक परिवर्तन या विरुद्ध होते. शेषराव मडावी

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म्हणतात“ बिरसाचे आंदोलन म्हणजे मानवी हक्काची, मानवाधिकारासाठी केलेली लढाई होती. आदिवासींना गुलामगिरीतून मुक्त करून शोषणमुक्त समाजाची, निर्मिती करणे हे त्यांचे स्वप्न होते. बहुजन वर्ग संघटीत, संघर्ष सिध्द झाला की माठाली सिंहासने सहज हालवू शकतो यावर त्यांचा विश्वास होता. म्हणूनच त्यांनी आपल्या बांधवास एकत्रित आणून त्यांच्यात आत्मविश्वास निर्माण करण्याचा कार्यक्रम हाती घेतला.”

1895 ला बिरसा यांनी स्वराज्याची घोषणा करून इंग्रज सरकारला उघड आव्हान दिले. आदिवासी आणि जंगल स्वतंत्र असल्यामुळे जंगलसंपत्तीवर आपलाच अधिकार असून कोणतेही कर देणे बंधनकारक नाही, आदिवासी धार्मिकतेने स्वतंत्र आहेत त्यामुळे कोणतेही बंधन आदिवासींवर लादू नये. आदिवासी स्त्रियांचे शारीरिक शोषण केले जाऊ नये, शोषण केले जात असेल तर कठोर शिक्षा व्हावी, आदिवासी मुलांना

इतरांसारखे पूर्ण शिक्षण दिले जावे, कोणताही स्पृश्य-अस्पृश्य भेदभाव न पाळता आदिवासींना देवळात जाण्याचे स्वातंत्र्य हवे, आदिवासींवर लादलेले दास्यत्वाचे बंधन नष्ट व्हावे, आदिवासी क्षेत्रातील वनसंपत्ती, जमीन, शेती यावर भूधारकांचे वर्चस्व नष्ट करून आदिवासींना त्यांच्या जमीनी परत कराव्या अशा अनेक समाजविकासाच्या मागण्या इंग्रज सरकारसमोर ठेवून बिरसा जनजागृती करू लागले. त्यांच्या मोहक वाणीने अनेक गैर आदिवासींनाही आपलेसे केले. आदिवासी समाजाची अवस्था इतकी दयनिय होती की या मागण्या म्हणजे आपले स्वर्गच आहे अशा भावनेमुळे बहुसंख्य समाज बिरसा मुंडाच्या आदोलनाला जोडला गेला. काही अत्यंत सक्रिय कार्यकर्तेही तयार झाले, आदिवासी सैनिक तर सोबत होतेच. या सर्व सहकार्यांना ‘बिरसाईट्स’ म्हणण्यात येत होते. कोणत्याही संकटाला, आव्हानाला आणि मृत्यूला न भिणारा

म्हणजे 'बिरसाईट्स' होय. समाजजागृती करण्याच्या कार्यात हे बिरसाईट्स सतत सहकार्य करत असून बिरसासोबत राहत असत.

### बिरसा मुंडा यांची पहिली अटक:

23-24 ऑगस्ट 1995 आणि यापूर्वी केलेल्या अनेक भाषणामुळे इंग्रज सरकार संतापले होते. शेवटी बिरसाच्या आंदोलनावर बंधन घालण्याकरीता 19 नोव्हेंबर 1895 ला बिरसा वर सरकारविरुद्ध विद्रोह करण्याच्या आरोपाखाली अटक करण्यात आली. कधी सहकारी असलेल्या जमीनदार जगमोहनसिंहने फितूरी करून बिरसाला अटक करण्यास मदत केली. धार्मिक परिवर्तनाला आळा बसल्यामुळे पादरी चिडलेले होते, त्यांनी बिरसा विरोधात साक्ष देत बिरसाला सोडणे धोकादायक आहे असे न्यायालयाला निक्षून सांगितल्यामुळे बिरसाला 2 वर्षांच्या सश्रम कारावासात टाकण्यात आले. बिरसा दोन वर्षे तुरुंगांत असताना इसाई धर्म

प्रसारकांनी पुन्हा कितीतरी आदिवासींना धर्मांतर करवून ख्रिश्चन बनविले. एवढेच नव्हे तर त्यांच्या गैरहाजरीत वनकायदा अंतर्गत इंग्रज सरकारने आदिवासींच्या सर्व जमीनी सरकार जमा केल्या. 30 नोव्हेंबर 1897 रोजी बिरसाची तुरुंगांतून सुटका झाली. बिरसाच्या सुटकेची बातमी वावटळासारखी पसरली आणि आदिवासींच्या जीवनात पुन्हा प्राणवायूचा संचार झाला. म्हणून वामन शेळमाके म्हणतात, “युवा क्रांतिकारक बिरसा मुंडाच्या नेतृत्वाने ब्रिटीश सरकार हादरले, बिरसाच्या आंदोलनाला मुंडा कोल, सिंधूकानू, सरदारी संघर्षाची धार होती. बिरसांची लढाई व आंदोलन हे सांस्कृतिक, धार्मिक, वैचारिक, संसाधन (जल, जंगल, जमीन) आणि स्वातंत्र्य अशा पाच प्रकारच्या स्तरावर एकाचवेळी सातत्याने सुरू होते. स्वातंत्र्याची पहिली ठिणगी पाडणारा, घोषणा करणारा क्रांतिवीर बिरसा मुंडा होता. ”तुरुंगांतून सुटून आल्यावर बिरसाने पुन्हा मुंडा

सरदारांना, अनुयायांना एकत्र करून वेगवेगळ्या वर्गात विभाजन करून सेवादल असे नाव देऊन 10 हजार आदिवासींना यात समाविष्ट करण्यात आले होते.

### जंगल राज्याची घोषणा:

बिरसाने दिनांक 11.08.1898 ला जंगल राज्याची निर्मिती करून चार हजार मुंडाची सेना निर्माण केली तसेच जंगल राजचे योग्य प्रशासन चालविण्याकरीता मंत्रीमंडळाची निर्मिती केली. बंदगाव, तोरण, मुरुह, जसपूर, रामपूर, सरगुजा, जांजगीर, रायपूर हे जंगल राज्याच्या हद्दीत असल्यामुळे तिथले स्वराज्य सुराज्य व्हावे म्हणून बिरसा सतत प्रयत्नरत होते. याकरीता त्यांनी आपल्या सेना समूहाचे तीन गटात विभाजन केले.

1) प्रचारक किंवा गुरू: या श्रेणीतील सदस्य अत्यंत विश्वासू असून यांच्यासोबत गुप्त बैठकी घेऊन निर्णय घेण्यात येत असत.

2) पुराणिक अथवा पुरानक: या गटातील सदस्य खुल्या स्वरूपात विद्रोह करण्याकरीता नेहमीच तत्पर असत.

3) नायक किंवा ननक: आंदोलन करण्याची इच्छा असलेल्या सर्वांना इथे प्रवेश होता पण गुप्त सभेत यांचा सहभाग राहत नसे. यांना निर्णय कळविले जात असे.

मागच्या आंदोलनातील चूका यावेळेस होऊ नये म्हणून बिरसा खबरदार राहत असत. हे आंदोलन भारतभर पसरावे याकरीता त्यांनी स्वतः तिर्थयात्रेच्या नावावर अनेक स्थळांना भेटी दिल्या यात चुटिया यात्रा, पुरी यात्रा, नवरत्नगढ यात्रा ह्या महत्वाच्या यात्रा आहेत तर खूंटी, राची, चक्रधरपूर, बुण्डू, तमाड़, करी, तोरपा, बसिया आणि सिसई सारख्या ठिकाणावर भेट देऊन सेना गठीत करण्याचे कार्य केले. या सर्व सेनेचे मुख्यालय खूंटी ठेवण्यात आले.

### सशस्त्र विद्रोहाची घोषणा:

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दिनांक 24 डिसेंबर 1899 रोजी सशस्त्र क्रांतीची घोषणा करण्यात आली. यापूर्वी विविध गुप्त सभा घेऊन प्रचारकांशी अनेक मुद्द्यांवर चर्चा करून निर्णय घेण्यात आले. यात फेब्रुवारी 1998 ची डोंबरी सभा, मार्च 1998 ची सिंबुआ सभा आणि 22 डिसेंबरची स्मशान घाटातील सभा महत्वाच्या आहेत. यासर्व गोष्टींची थोडीफार भनक इंग्रजांना होती पण नाताळचा सण आणि योग्य पुराव्याअभावी इंग्रज सरकारला कोणताही निर्णय घेता आला नाही तरीही त्यांनी आपल्या गुप्त हेरांना, शिपायांना माहिती गोळा करण्याकरीता नेमलेच होते पण बिरसा समर्थकांनी त्यांच्या हाती काहीही लागू दिले नाही. 24 डिसेंबरला सशस्त्र क्रांतीचे रणशिंग फुंकून आदिवासींनी खुंटी, बसिया, तोरपा, करी, तपाड़, चक्रधरपूर या क्षेत्रात भयंकर तोडफोड आणि विषारी बाण चालविण्यात आले. शाळा, चर्च इत्यादींची तोडफोड झाल्यामुळे इंग्रज सरकारने राची

जिल्ह्यातील डिप्टी कमिशनर ए.सी. स्ट्रीट फील्ड आणि काही सैनिकांना तपासणीकरीता पाठवले आणि त्यांच्या लक्षात आले की हे आंदोलन सहज माघार घेणारे नाही. पण तरीही सैन्याच्या अनेक तुकड्या आंदोलन ठिकाणी तैनात करण्यात आल्या. बिरसाला शोधण्याकरीता अनेक प्रयत्न करण्यात आले पण समर्थकांमुळे बिरसाचा पता लागला नाही.

दिनांक 05 जानेवारी 1900 रोजी एटकेडीह ला सभा घेण्यात आली या सभेचा नायक 'गया मुंडा' होता. सभेची माहिती इंग्रज सरकारला झाल्यामुळे त्यांनी त्या क्षेत्राला घेराव घातला पण यश मिळाले नाही. इंग्रजांशी प्रत्यक्ष सामना करण्याची ही पहिली वेळ होती, त्यात आदिवासींना यश मिळाले नाही पण नंतर कमिशन स्ट्रीटफील्ड ने गया मुंडाला त्याचे घर जाळून पकडले. यानंतर इंग्रज सरकारने दडपशाहीचे धोरण स्विकारून आदिवासी विद्रोह्यांना पकडण्याकरीता जाळे पसरले. पण यश न आल्यामुळे

बिरसाच्या डोमबारी येथे बलात्कार आणि हत्येचे तांडव पसरवले. बिरसाला पकडण्याकरीता सापडे रचले.

### आंदोलन आणि बिरसाचा अंतः

बिरसाला पकडण्याकरीता 19 जानेवारी पासून शोधा-शोध सुरू झाली. कमिशनर थॉमसन यांनी सैनिक व पोलीस अधिकाऱ्यांना घेऊन संपूर्ण क्षेत्र पिंजून काढले पण बिरसाचा शोध लागला नाही. उलट बिरसाचे सहकारी मुंडा सरदार डोंका आणि माझिया ने आत्मसमर्पण केले. यांच्या आत्मसमर्पणामुळे विद्रोहाचा शेवट झाला. दोन सरदार मिळाल्यामुळे सरकारने पुन्हा बिरसाला पकडून देणाऱ्या लोकांना बक्षीस देण्याची घोषणा केली. बिरसा आपल्या कुटुंबासह रानोमाळ भटकत होते. मनमारू आणि झरीकेल या गावाच्या सात लोकांनी बिरसाला पकडून देण्याचा ठाम निर्णय घेतला आणि ते रानोमाळ भटकू लागले. शेवटी यश आले पण जागृतावस्थेत बिरसाला पकडणे कठीण असल्यामुळे रात्री झोपले असता

त्यांना कैद करून डिप्टी कमिशनरला सोपविण्यात आले. ज्या लोकांसाठी बिरसाने आपले जीवन वेचले त्यांनीच विश्वासघात केला. बिरसाला रांची च्या कारागृहात पाठविण्यात आले. 9 मार्च 1900 ला झालेली अटक म्हणजे बिरसाचा अंत होता. कारागृहातही आपल्या सहकाऱ्यांची काळजी बिरसांना वाटत होती. त्यामुळे सहकाऱ्यांची बिरसाच्या आंदोलनाशी आपला सुतराम संबंध नाही असे सांगावे अशी सूचनाही दिली.

बिरसाला कारावासातील हवामान मानवले नसल्यामुळे दिवसेंदिवस त्यांची प्रकृती खालावत गेली. कोर्टात टाकलेल्या बिरसाच्या सुटकेच्या खटल्याला तारीख वर तारीख मिळत होती. अशातच 8 जून 1900 ला त्याची प्रकृति अधिक बिघडली आणि 9 जून 1900 ला त्यांनी आपला देह त्याग केला. एका प्रंचड क्रांतीवीरासकट क्रांतीयुगाचा अंत झाला. बिरसाच्या जन्माच्या वादाप्रमाणेच मृत्यूही

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वादग्रस्त झाला. काहीच्या मते त्यांचा  
रहस्यमय मृत्यू झाला. तर काहींच्या मते  
त्यांना जेवणातून विषबाधा करण्यात  
आली होती. ब्रिटीश सरकारने मात्र  
मृत्यूचे कारण हैजा जाहिर केले होते. वय  
25 वर्षेपूर्ण होण्याआधीच तेजस्वी  
क्रांतीवीराचा मृत्यू आदिवासी समाजाला  
पोरके करून गेला. पण तरीही  
आजतागायत बिरसा मुंडाचे उलगुलान  
सुरुच आहे. अगोदर परक्या सरकार  
सोबत तर आता स्वकीय  
राज्यकर्त्यासोबत, म्हणूनच वामन  
शेळमाके म्हणतात, “अशा या  
महामानवाचे संपूर्ण जीवन उलगुलानाला  
सतत उर्जा पुरविणारे न संपणारे इंधन  
आहे. जल, जंगल, जमिनीचा प्रणेता  
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प्रेरणास्थान बिरसा मुंडाच्या विचारांनी  
संपूर्ण देश धगधगतो आहे.”

**समारोप:**

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योध्दा बिरसा मुंडा यांनी आदिवासी  
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अर्पण केले. ब्रिटीश दडपशाही विरुद्ध  
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समाजाच्या विकासाकरीता सशस्त्र  
क्रांतीकारी उठाव करून ख्रिश्चन  
मिशनरींचा धर्म प्रसार आणि प्रचाराला  
आळा घालण्याचे कार्य तसेच सावकार,  
जमीनदार, भांडवलदार, मिशनरी या  
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बिरसा पर्यंतचा प्रवास अत्यंत खडतरतेने  
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वर्षी आपली जीवन यात्रा संपविणारे लढाईचा वारसा दे, उलगुलान घोष दे,  
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## बिरसा मुंडा एक लोकनायक

(आदिवासींची ओळख, स्वायत्तता आणि संस्कृती वाचवण्याचा एक संघर्ष)

प्रा. डॉ. रवी एस. सोरते

(अर्थशास्त्र विभाग)

श्री पंढरीनाथ कला-वाणिज्य महाविद्यालय,  
नरखेड.

### प्रस्तावना -

भारतीय वंशाच्या अमूल्य वारसापैकी एक लोकनायक म्हणजे बिरसा मुंडा आहे. बिरसा मुंडा यांचा जन्म 1875 ला झाला. छोटा नागपूर पठारावर रहात असलेला आदिवासींचा एक गट समुदाय म्हणजे मुंडा होय. आदिवासींना इंग्रजांच्या राजवटीविरुद्ध भडकविल्याबद्दल अटक केली गेली. या दरम्यान, त्यांना 2 वर्षांची शिक्षा सुनावण्यात आली. वडिलांनी मिशनरी शाळेत दाखला करून दिला. त्यामुळे त्यांना त्या शाळेत मानुसकिचे धडे मिळाले. परंतु काही दिवसातच बिरसाने शाळा सोडली. सुमारे 1890 च्या काळात बिरसा वैष्णव धर्माकडे वळले. 1 ऑक्टोबर 1894 रोजी जेव्हा त्यांनी सर्व मुंडां समुदायाला एकत्र करून इंग्रजांविरुद्ध शेतसारा माफीकरीता आपल्या

मागण्यासाठी आंदोलन सुरू केले तेव्हा बिरसाला एक तरुण नेता म्हणून ओळखले गेले.

1895 मध्ये बिरसा मुंडा यांनी ब्रिटिशांच्या जमींदारी पध्दती व महसूल यंत्रणा तसेच जंगल-भूमी चा लढा उभारला. यासोबतच बिरसाने सावकारांविरुद्ध सुध्दा लढा उभा केला. हे सावकार व महाजन ज्यांना ते दिकू म्हणत असत, कर्जाच्या बदल्यात त्यांची जमीन ताब्यात घेत होते. ही केवळ बंडखोरी नसून आदिवासींची ओळख, स्वायत्तता आणि संस्कृती वाचवण्याचा एक संघर्ष होता.

### 19 व्याशतकातील सर्वात महत्वपूर्ण आदिवासी चळवळ:

1857 च्या नंतर सरदार चळवळ सुरू केली जी शांत स्वभावाची चळवळ

होती. परंतु यामुळे आदिवासींची परिस्थिती बदलली नाही. मुंडा समुदायांनी आगामी चळवळीला ज्वलंत रूप देण्याचा निर्णय घेतला. बिरसा मुंडा आंदोलन सरदार चळवळीपेक्षा तीव्र आणि हिंसक होते. या चळवळीचे नेतृत्व बिरसा मुंडा यांच्याकडे होते त्यांच्या कडे सर्वांचे सुशिक्षित युवा नेता म्हणून लक्ष केंद्रित झाले होते. विविध उद्देशाच्या पूर्ततेसाठी ही चळवळ सुरू करण्यात आली होती. त्यामुळे त्याचे रूप देखील मिश्रित होते. या चळवळीने आर्थिकबदल, राजकीय बदल आणि धार्मिक पुनरुज्जीवन यासारख्या विविध उद्दिष्टांची पूर्तता देखील केली.

मुंडा समुदायाने 18 व्या शतकापासून ते 20 व्या शतकापर्यंत इंग्रजी सरकार आणि भारतीय राज्यकर्ते, जमीनदार यांच्याविरुद्ध बंड केले. 19 व्या शतकाच्या शेवटच्या दशकात बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या नेतृत्वात मुंडा उठाव हा 19 व्या शतकातील सर्वात महत्वाच्या आदिवासी चळवळींपैकी एक उठाव आहे.

या उठावालाच उलगुलानया नावाने देखील ओळखले जाते. मुंडा बंडखोर' झारखंडमधील सर्वात मोठा आणि शेवटचा उग्र असलेल्या आदिवासी उठाव होता, ज्यामध्ये हजारो मुंडा आदिवासी शहीद झाले. बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या नेतृत्वात 'बिरसा मुंडा आणि त्यांचे आंदोलन' या चळवळीवर प्रख्यात समाजशास्त्रज्ञ आणि मानववंशशास्त्रज्ञ यांनी आपले विचार मांडले आहे.

### बिरसा मुंडा यांचे नेतृत्व-

बिरसा मुंडा आदिवासींची दयनीय अवस्था पाहून त्यांना जमींदार व कंत्राटदारांच्या अत्याचारातून मुक्त करायचे होते. बिरसा मुंडा यांना वाटले की शांततापूर्ण मार्गाने आंदोलन चालवण्याने निरर्थक आहे. म्हणूनच त्यांनी आंदोलनात अधिकाधिक तरुणांना संघटित केले. मुंडा समुदायाने बिरसांना त्यांचा देव म्हणून स्वीकारले. बिरसा मुंडाचा प्रत्येक शब्द आदिवासींसाठी ब्रह्मवाक्य झाला. बिरसा मुंडा यांनी जाहीर केले की कोणीही सरकारला कर द्यायचा नाही. आदिवासी

मुंड्यांनी त्याचे पालन केले. बिरसा चळवळीने ज्या भूमीसाठी आदिवासींनी बऱ्याच दिवसांपासून संघर्ष केला होता. मुंडा समाजाला सरकारकडून योग्य न्याय मिळू शकला नाही. या असमर्थतेला कंटाळून त्यांनी ब्रिटीश राज संपवून मुंडा राज स्थापनेचा निर्णय घेतला. त्यांना सर्व ब्रिटिश अधिकाऱ्यांना आणि ख्रिश्चन मिशनरींना त्यांच्या हद्दीतून घालवायचे होते. बिरसा मुंडा यांनी एका नव्या धर्माचा अवलंब करून मुंडांचे आयोजन केले. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वात मुंडांनी 1899 ते 1900 मध्ये बंड केले.

### **मुंडा समुदायांची ब्रिटीश सरकार विरुद्ध उठाव आणि युद्ध-**

1897 ते 1900 दरम्यान मुंडा समुदाय आणि ब्रिटीश सैनिक यांच्यात अनेक युद्धे झाली त्यामुळे ब्रिटीश सरकार त्रस्त झाली होती. ऑगस्ट 1897 मध्ये, बिरसा आणि त्याच्या 400 सैनिकांनी तीर-कमानांनी सज्ज होऊन खूंदी पोलिस ठाण्यावर हल्ला केला. 1898 मध्ये,

मुंड्यांनी इंग्रज सैन्यावर टांगा नदीच्या काठी संघर्ष करून सुरुवातीला इंग्रजी सैन्याचा पराभव केला, पण नंतर ब्रिटीश सैनिकांनी त्या भागातील अनेक आदिवासी नेत्यांना अटक करण्यात आली. जानेवारी 1900 मध्ये डोंबडी टेकडीवर आणखी एक संघर्ष झाला ज्यामध्ये बरीच महिला आणि मुले ठार झाली. बिरसा त्या ठिकाणी त्यांच्या जाहीर सभांना संबोधित करत होते. नंतर बिरसाच्या काही शिष्यांनाही अटक करण्यात आली. शेवटी बिरसाला स्वतः चक्रधरपूर येथे 3 फेब्रुवारी 1900 रोजी अटक केली.

कमी संख्या आणि अपूर्ण संसाधनांमुळे बिरसाने गनिमी युद्धाचा सहारा घेतला. रांची आणि आसपासच्या भागातील पोलिसामध्ये बिरसाची दहशत निर्माण झाली होती. इंग्रजांनी त्यांना पकडण्यासाठी पाचशे रुपयांचे बक्षीस ठेवले होते. जे की, त्यावेळी ही रक्कत खूप मोठ्या प्रमाणावर होती. बिरसा म्हणायचे, "माणूस ठार मारता येतो, त्याचे

विचार नाही". बिरसाचे विचार संपूर्ण मुंडा समुदायाला व आदिवासींना संघर्षाचा मार्ग दाखवतात. आजही बिरसा हे आदिवासींसाठी सर्वात मोठे अग्रस्थान आहे. आजही बिहार, ओडीसा, झारखंड, छत्तीसगड आणि पश्चिम बंगाल या आदिवासी भागात बिरसा मुंडाची देवता सारखीपूजा-उपासना केली जाते.

### ब्रिटीश धोरणांविरुद्ध जनजागृती -

ज्या खेड्यांत किंवा गावांमध्ये सामूदायिक शेती करण्यात येत होती तिथे जमीनदारी पध्दती लागू करून ब्रिटिशांनी जमीनदार व दलाल यांच्यात तेथील शेती वितरीत करून, तेथील आदिवासींमध्ये फूट पाडून महसूलची नवीन प्रणाली लागू केली. लोकांनी याविरुद्ध मोठ्या प्रमाणात आंदोलन केले आणि त्या व्यवस्थेविरुद्ध बंड करण्यास सुरुवात केली. बिरसा मुंडा यांनी मुंडा आदिवासींमध्ये इंग्रजी सरकारच्या लोकविरोधी धोरणांविरुद्ध लोकांना संवेदना देण्यास सुरुवात केली. जेव्हा त्याला सरकारने रोखले आणि

अटक केली तेव्हा त्यांनी धर्मोपदेशनाच्या नावाखाली आदिवासींमध्ये राजकीय चेतना पसरवायला सुरुवात केली. तो स्वतः ला देव म्हणू लागला. त्यांनी मुंडा समाजात धार्मिक आणि समाज सुधारणेचे कार्यक्रम सुरू केले आणि सर्व वाईट गोष्टींपासून मुक्त होण्याचे वचन दिले.

हळूहळू बिरसाचे लक्ष मुंडा समुदायाच्या गरिबीकडे गेले. वर्तमान काळाप्रमाणे आदिवासींचे जीवन अजूनही वंचित होते. खाण्यासाठी अन्न नाही, परिधान करण्यासाठी कपडे नाही. एकीकडे दारिद्र्य होते तर दुसरीकडे "भारतीय वन अधिनियम- 1882" ने त्यांची जंगले काढून घेतली होती. जे आदिवासी जंगलाचे खरे हकदार होते त्यांना जंगलातून घालवून दिले. हे बघून बिरसाने शस्त्र हाती घेतले आणि हालचाली सुरू झाल्या. 1898 मध्ये डोंबरी टेकड्यांवर मुंडांचा मोठा जमाव होता, ज्यामुळे चळवळीची पाश्र्वभूमी निर्माण केली. आदिवासींमध्ये राजकीय चेतना

पसरवण्याचे काम सुरूच होते. शेवटी, 24 डिसेंबर 1899 रोजी बिरसा समुदायांनी इंग्रजांविरुद्ध युद्ध पुकारले. 5 जानेवारी 1900 पर्यंत, संपूर्ण मांडा प्रदेशात बंडखोरीचे उद्रेक पसरला. ब्रिटीश सैन्याने चळवळ दडपण्यास सुरुवात केली, परंतु त्यांना यश आले नाही.

परिस्थिती आजही बिरसा मुंडाच्या काळातलीच दिसून येते. आदिवासींना हाकलून दिले जात आहे, डिकू अजूनही आहेत. जंगलांची संसाधने त्यावेळीही आदिवासींच्या मालकीची नव्हती किंवा ती आजही नाहीत, वास्तविक दावेदार दुसरेच दिसून येतात. महान कादंबरीकार महाश्वेता देवी यांच्या 'जंगल के दावेदार' कादंबरीचा उताऱ्यामध्ये म्हणतात, "जर पृथ्वीवर दोन वेळा जेवन मिळाले, वर्षामध्ये चार जाडे कपडे, हिवाळ्यात उब देणारे घर, महाजन व दलालांपासून सुटका, अंधार घालविण्याकरीता महुआचे तेल, जंगलाची मुळे आणि मध, वन हिरण आणि ससा-पक्षी इ. मांस, खाण्यासाठी

काळे मीठ - बिरसा मुंडाना हे सर्व सापडले असते तर ते देव झाले नसते".

आदिवासी आणि स्त्रियांच्या प्रश्नांवर काम करणारे प्रख्यात साहित्यीकार रमणिका गुप्ता आपल्या 'आदिवासी अस्मिता का संकट' या पुस्तकात लिहितात, आदिवासी भागातील जंगले आणि जमीन राजा-नवाब किंवा ब्रिटिशांनी काबीज केली नव्हती. राजा-नवाब तिथे असतांना त्यांनी लुटले, व त्यांच्यावर अत्याचार केले. परंतु त्यांनी त्यांच्या संस्कृती आणि व्यवस्थेत हस्तक्षेप केला नाही. सुरुवातीला ब्रिटिशही तेथे जाऊ शकले नव्हते. काळानुरूप रेल्वेच्या विस्तारासाठी जेव्हा त्यांनी जुन्या मानभूमी आणि दामिनी-ए-कोह (सध्याच्या संथाल परगणना) भागांचे जंगले तोडण्यास सुरुवात केली आणि मोठ्या प्रमाणात आदिवासींना विस्थापित केले तेव्हा आदिवासी चैकार आणि भटकंतीस सुरुवात झाली. त्या पुढे लिहितात, 'ब्रिटिशांनी जमींदारी प्रणाली लागू करून आदिवासींच्या खेड्यांमध्ये

विभाजन केले. जेथे आदिवासी मोठ्या  
प्रमाणात शेती करीत असत तिथे जमींदार  
व दलालांमध्ये जमिनीचे विभाजन करून  
महसूलची नवीन प्रणाली लागू केली.  
त्यामुळे आदिवासी लोक मोठ्या  
प्रमाणावर त्याविरोधात चिडले आणि त्या  
व्यवस्थेविरुद्ध बंड करण्यास सुरुवात  
केली.

आदिवासींच्या समस्या न संपता  
उलट जंगलाती आदिवासीच संपत जात  
आहे. सर्व काही जागेवरच आहे, फक्त  
नाही आहे, तर केवळ एक व्यक्ती तो  
म्हणजे “आदिवासींचा देव” बिरसा मुंडा.  
अश्या परिस्थितीमध्ये कवि भुजंग मेश्राम  
लिहीतात,  
‘बिरसा तुम्हें कहीं से भी आना होगा,  
घास काटती धरती हो या, लकड़ी काटती  
कुल्हाड़ी,  
यहां-वहां से, पूरब-पश्चिम, उत्तर दक्षिण से  
कहीं से भी आ मेरे बिरसा,  
खेतों की बयार बनकर  
लोग तेरी बाट जोहते.

‘बिरसा तुम्हें कहीं से भी आना होगा’  
आदिवासी साहित्यकार हिरीराम मीणा  
आपल्या कवितेमध्ये बिरसा मुंडाबद्दल  
लिहीतांना म्हणतात,  
“मैं केवल देह नहीं!  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हू!  
पुश्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं!  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता,  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से बेदखल नहीं कर  
सकता!  
उलगुलान! उलगुलान!! उलगुलान!!!”

### बिरसा मुंडा यानं अटक -

1895 मध्ये बिरसा मुंडा यांना  
बंडखोरी पसरविण्याच्या आणि  
राज्याविरुद्ध कट रचण्याच्या गुन्ह्यासाठी  
अटक करण्यात आली. त्यांना दोन  
वर्षांच्या तुरुंगवासाची शिक्षा सुनावण्यात  
आली. तुरुंगातून सुटल्यानंतर, बिरसा मुंडा  
हे अधिक सक्रिय झाले आणि अधिक  
उत्साहाने आदिवासी तरुणांना  
चळवळीसाठी प्रवृत्त करू लागले. जंगलात  
गुप्त बैठक आयोजित करण्यात आल्या

आणि सर्वांना या चळवळीत सहभागी होण्यास प्रोत्साहित केले गेले. ते स्वतः बाणांनी राणी व्हिक्टोरियाच्या पुतळ्याला ठोकून धनुर्धारी सराव करीत होते.

शेकडो मुंडा समुदायांतील आदीवासी इंग्रजांशी डोंबरी टेकडीवर युद्ध करतांना 9 जानेवारी, 1900 ला अमर झाले. हा दिवस मुंडाच्या इतिहासात अमर दिवस म्हणून ओळखला जातो. त्यामुळे आंदोलन जवळजवळ संपले. अनेक मुंडा समुदायांतील आदीवासींना अटक करून मुंडांवर खटला चालविण्यात आला, ज्यात दोघांना फाशी देण्यात आली, 40 जणांना जन्मठेपेची शिक्षा, 6 जणांना चैदा वर्षे शिक्षा, 3 जणांना चार ते सहा वर्षांची शिक्षा आणि 15 जणांना तीन वर्षांची शिक्षा ठोठावण्यात आली. बिरसा मुंडा आणि ब्रिटीश यांच्यात अंतिम आणि निर्णायक युद्ध 1900 मध्ये रांची जवळ डंबरी टेकडीवर झाले. बिरसाच्या नेतृत्वात हजारो मुंडा आदिवासींनी लढा दिला परंतु बाण व भाले खूप काळापर्यंत इंग्रजांच्या

तोफांचा सामना करू शकले नाही. त्यामुळे शेकडो मुंडा समुदायांतील आदीवासी लोक निर्धृणपणे मारले गेले. 25 जानेवारी, 1900 च्या स्टेटसमॅन वृत्तपत्रानुसार या युद्धात 400 लोक ठार झाले होते. ही लढाई इंग्रजांनी जिंकली तरी पण बिरसा इंग्रजांच्या हाती सापडले नाही. परंतु मुंडा समुदायांतीलच काही लोकांनी पाचशे रुपयांच्या रोख बक्षिसाला बळी पडून बिरसानां पकडून दिले. त्यानंतर 9 जून, 1900 रोजी त्याचा मृत्यू झाला. स्वतःच्याच लोकांनी फसवणुक केल्यामुळे बिरसामुंडाचा मृत्यू झाला.

### सारांश-

बिरसाच्या मृत्युनंतर बिरसा मुंडा आंदोलन विस्कळीत झाले. बिरसाच्या तीन महत्त्वाच्या साथीदारांना फाशी देण्यात आली. अनेक मुंड्यांना तुरुंगात डांबले गेले. परिणामी, बिरसा मुंडा आंदोलन अयशस्वी झाले. आदिवासींना या चळवळीचा त्वरित फायदा झाला नाही, परंतु सरकारला त्यांच्या गंभीर



## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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परिस्थितीचा व चळवळीचा विचार बिरसा मुंडाची समाधी रांचीतील कोकर करण्यास भाग पाडले गेले. आदिवासींच्या जवळील डिस्टिलरी पुलाजवळ आहे. त्याच जागेचे सर्वेक्षण करण्यात आले. 1908 वेळी, त्याचा पुतळा देखील स्थापित केला मध्ये छोटानागपूर शेतकरी कायदा मंजूर होता. त्याच्या नावाने बिरसा मुंडा करण्यात आला. मुंड्यांना अनेक भूमी मध्यवर्ती कारागृह आणि रांचीमधील अधिकार मिळाले आणि त्यांना बिरसा मुंडा आंतरराष्ट्रीय विमानतळ आहे. बेरोजगारीपासून मुक्ती मिळाली. मुंडा आज भारताच्या इतिहासात बिरसा मुंडा समाज अजूनही बिरसांना आपला देव अमर आणि पूज्यनीय बनले आहे. मानतात.

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## राष्ट्रवादाचा अग्रदुत आणि जननायक: बिरसा मुंडा

प्रा. डॉ. कविता तातेड

इतिहास विभाग प्रमुख

लो.बा. अणे महिला महा. यवतमाळ

### प्रस्तावना -

प्राचीन भारतीय इतिहासात आर्य अनार्यांचा संघर्ष वैदिक काळात घडून आला. इ. स. 1922 मध्ये हडप्पा आणि मोहनजोदडो उत्खननातून द्राविडी संस्कृतीचा शोध लागला व वर्तमान काळातही या संस्कृतीचे अस्तित्व भारतातील अनेक भागात दिसून येते. मध्यकालखंडात भारतावर मुस्लीम संस्कृतीचे आक्रमण झाले असतांना मध्यभारतामध्ये आदिवासींची राजसत्ता उदयाला आली. गोंडवाना प्रदेशातील आदिवासींच्या राज्यकारभाराची इतिहासकारांनी विशेष नोंद घेतलेली दिसत नाही. वास्तविक आदिवासी भारताचे मुळ निवासी असतांनाही त्यांच्या ऐतिहासिक कार्याची विशेष दखल इतिहासात दिसून येत नाही. त्यामुळे भारताचे मुळ निवासी व त्यांच्या

संस्कृतीचा इतिहास यावर विशेष संशोधनाची गरज दिसते.

भारतात ब्रिटीश ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनीची राजकीय सत्ता येताच कंपनी सरकारने ब्रिटिशांच्या आर्थिक वसाहतीला विकसित करण्यासाठी सामान्य जनतेबरोबर आदिवासींवरही अत्याचार केले. इंग्रजांनी आपल्या फायद्यासाठी आदिवासींचे उदरनिर्वाहाचे साधन असलेली वनसंपदा आपल्या ताब्यात घेण्याचा प्रयत्न केला व त्यांच्या वसाहतींवरही आक्रमण केले. त्यामुळे आदिवासी चिडले व त्यांना इंग्रजांविरुद्ध उठाव करावा लागला. आदिवासींना सर्वप्रथम परप्रांतातून आलेल्या आपल्याच लोकांचा सामना करावा लागला. त्यामुळे भिल्ल, रामोशा, हटकर, संथाल, मुंडा, कोलाम उठावांचा आदिवासी संघर्षाचा उल्लेख

करता येईल. याशिवाय 1756 ते 1894 या काळात आदिवासींनी केलेल्या विविध उठावामध्ये सरदार मुंडा आंदोलनाचा प्रामुख्याने उल्लेख करता येईल. वास्तविक भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य संग्रामात इंग्रजांविरुद्ध आवाज उठविणारे आदिवासी हे प्रथम आंदोलनकर्ते होते असे म्हणता येईल. भारतीय लोकांसोबत आदिवासीसुद्धा राष्ट्रवादी भावनेने प्रेरित होऊन इंग्रजी सत्ते विरुद्ध लढत होते. आदिवासी समूहांनी केलेल्या स्वातंत्र्य संघर्षामध्ये क्रांतीकारकांमध्ये बिरसामुंडाचे योगदान ऐतिहासिक दृष्ट्या अनन्यसाधारण महत्वाचे असले तरी वर्तमान काळातील इतिहास लेखनातही आदिवासींच्या कामगिरीबाबत दुर्लक्ष झालेले दिसून येते. क्रांतीकारी आदिवासी जननायकांची माहिती जगापुढे यावी या उद्योगाने हा लेख तयार करण्यात आला आहे. याच भूमिकेतून बिरसा मुंडा यांचे कार्य व योगदान याबाबत अभ्यास करण्यात आला.

तत्कालीन परिस्थितीत इंग्रज राजवटीत आदिवासींच्या जमिनीवर महाजन व जमीनदार यांनी जबरन हक्क मिळविला होता या बाबत आपल्या समाजबांधवांना संघठीत करून बिरसाने उद्धोषणा केली की, "आत्मसम्मान के साथ आत्मविश्वास को भी बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। यदि ऐसा नहीं करोगे तो हम अपने समाज की रक्षा कैसे करेंगे?" त्यांच्या या विधानातून संघर्ष आणि प्रयत्न केल्याशिवाय संगठन टिकणार नाही अशी भावना व्यक्त होते. सततच्या अन्याय, अत्याचार, हिंसा आणि शोषणाने पीडित आदिवासी समाजात आत्मविश्वास निर्माण करण्याचे मोठे कार्य बिरसाने केले. इंग्रजी शासनातील दप्तरामध्ये मुंडा आदिवासीची नोंद चोर, डाकू, लुटारू अशी केल्या जात होती, त्यामुळे त्यांना न्याय मिळवितांना फार त्रास होत होता. या काळात न्याय मिळवितांनाही सरकारकडून आदिवासींचे शोषण केले जात होते. अशातच

इ.स.1869 मध्ये इंग्रज सरकारने 'वनसंरक्षण कायदा' केला व त्यानुसार जंगलातील रानमेवा आदिवासींनी विकू नये असे बंधन त्यांच्यावर आले त्यामुळे जीवननिर्वाहाचे मोठे संकट त्यांच्या समोर आले. त्याविरुद्ध स्वातंत्र्यासाठी सर्वप्रथम इ.स. 1890 मध्ये क्रांतीचे रणशिंग बिरसांनी फुकले व त्याने एक सशक्त संघटना निर्माण करून शत्रूंचा सामना करण्यास सुरुवात केली. क्रांतीकारक बिरसाचे योगदान मात्र स्थानिक आणि राष्ट्रीय इतिहास लेखनात आलेले आढळत नाही.

### राष्ट्रवादी बिरसा मुंडा-

फेब्रुवारी 1898 च्या गोंडवान्यातील एका सभेमध्ये बिरसाने कुन्हाडीने आपला हात कापला आणि आपल्या रक्ताने उपस्थित लोकांच्या कपाळावर टिळे लाविले आणि सर्वांकडून संकल्प करवून घेतला की, "जोपर्यंत आपल्या समाजावर झालेल्या अत्याचाराचा आपण बदला घेत नाही तोपर्यंत आपण

चूपचाप बसायचे नाही" या अर्थाने बिरसा स्वातंत्र्याचे अग्रदुत व महानायक ठरले. कारण त्यांनी उत्तम संघठन कौशल्य, नियोजनबद्धता स्वीकारून आदिवासी समाजाला संगठीत केले. बिरसाचे आंदोलन म्हणजे मानवी हक्कांच्या रक्षणासाठी मानवाधिकारासाठी केलेली स्वातंत्र्य लढाई होती. आदिवासींना गुलामगिरीतून मुक्त करून शोषणमुक्त समाजाची निर्मिती करणे हे त्याचे स्वप्न होते. समाजातील बहुजन वर्ग संगठीत झाला आणि संघर्षासाठी सिध्द झाल्यास राजकीय परिवर्तन घडवून आणू शकतो, यावर त्याचा विश्वास असल्याने बिरसा मुंडाने आपल्या समाज बांधवांस एकत्र आणून त्यांच्यात आत्मविश्वास निर्माण करण्याचे कार्य हाती घेतले. यावेळी बिरसाच्या असे लक्षात आले की, आपले बांधव धार्मिक संभ्रमाच्या कल्पनेत अडकलेले आहे. त्यातूनच आपल्या स्वतंत्र संस्कृतीचा विनाश अटळ आहे. म्हणून त्यांनी आपल्या मुळसंस्कृतीची

पुर्नस्थापना करण्याचे ठरविले आणि निसर्गदेवतेला प्रेरक मानून इश्वर पूजा नाकारली व एक पर्यायी धर्म विचार त्यांनी उभारला. बिरसाने जाहीर केले कि त्याच्या समर्थकांनी आपल्या घरासमोर तुळस लावून तिची पूजा करावी यावेळी बिरसा जनतेला उद्देशून म्हणाले, "माणसाचे मन स्वच्छ नसेल तर त्यांचा विनाश निश्चित आहे. जर बिरसाच्या नियमाचे पालन केले नाही तर त्याचे हृदय काचेसारखे चकनाचूर होऊन फुटून जाईल." अर्थात हा विचार जनसंगठन करण्यासाठी होता. आदिवासी संस्कृतीचे रक्षण करण्याचा उदात्त हेतू त्यामागे होते.

### क्रांतीकारी बिरसा-

आपल्या राष्ट्रवादी विचारांना बिरसाने कृतीची जोड दिली. 10 ऑक्टोबर 1895 च्या तगाड पोलिस ठाण्यातील रिपोर्ट मध्ये उल्लेख मिळतो की बिरसाच्या कार्यामुळे पोलिस यंत्रणाही भयभीत झाली होती. इ.स. 1895 बिरसाने समाजसुधारणेचे आंदोलन

निर्माण केले व त्याने आवाहन केले कि, 'आपण स्वतंत्र आहोत, लक्षात ठेवा जंगल आणि वनसंपदा आपल्या मालकीची आहे. आपल्या उदरनर्वाहाचे ते साधन आहेत. तेव्हा जंगलावर हक्क प्रस्थापित करा, त्यासाठी संघर्षाची तयारी ठेवा. एकत्रित व्हा आणि जंगलावर आपले राज्य स्थापन करा.' ब्रिटीश दासतेच्या धामधमीत रणांगणावर प्रत्यक्ष संघर्ष न करता बिरसाने लोकांच्या असंतोषाला प्रकट करण्याचे कार्य केले.

बिरसाच्या या आवाहनाला प्रतिसाद म्हणून आदिवासींनी स्वराज्याची घोषणा केली व शोषक समाजातील महाजन, जहांगीरदार यांच्या घराला आगी लावल्या. तामर पोलिस स्टेशनकडून बिरसा आंदोलनाचा रिपोर्ट जिल्हाधिकाऱ्यांना देतांना लिहले आहे की, 'बिरसाने आपले ठिकाण टेकडीवर बसविले आहे आणि जंगल तुमचे आहे तेव्हा त्यावर आपले अधिकार प्राप्त करा अशी शिकवण तो आदिवासींना देत आहे.' या

## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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अहवालाची इंग्रज सरकारने गंभीर दखल घेतली आणि 7 ऑगस्ट 1895 ला बिरसा व त्यांच्या वडिलांना अटक करण्यात आली. यानंतर पोलिसांनी त्यांच्यावर राजद्रोहाचा आरोप ठेवला की त्यांची लोकांना सरकार विरुद्ध विद्रोह करण्यास प्रेरित केले. बिरसाच्या अनुयायांनी त्यांना सोडविण्याचा प्रयत्न केला परंतु ते यशस्वी होऊ शकले नाही. यावेळी चाललेल्या खटल्यात साक्षी पुरावे देतांना मिशनऱ्यांनी त्यांच्या विरोधात उत्तर दिले तर बिरसाच्या बाजूने साक्ष देणाऱ्यांनी सांगितले की, बिरसा आम्हास चांगले जीवनातील नवसंस्काराचे उपदेश देत होते. याखटल्यात बिरसाला व त्याच्या 9 सहकाऱ्यांना 2 वर्षांची कडक शिक्षा व 50 रुपयाचा दंड सुनावला आणि जर दंड न भरला तर त्या शिक्षेमध्ये 6 महिने वाढ करण्यात येईल असा निर्णय दिला.' ही शिक्षा म्हणजेच बिरसाच्या कार्याच्या अभिव्यक्तीची पावती होती, याचा अर्थ आदिवासी समाजात जागृती होत

असल्याने ब्रिटीश सरकार भयभीत झाले होते.

इ.स. 1896- 97 मध्ये दुष्काळ पडला असतांना हजारो लोक मृत्युमुखी पडले. या काळात बिरसाने न्याय हक्कासाठी शस्त्र उभारून बिरसाने आपल्या नवीन राज्याची घोषणा केली. 'हे राज्य जंगल राज्य म्हणून ओळखले जाणार होते आणि बिरसा हे महानायक राहणार होते. 11 ऑगस्ट 1898 रोजी त्यांनी 4000 मुंडा सेना तयार केली आणि जंगल राजचे प्रशासन व्यवस्थित चालावे म्हणून मंत्रीपरिषदेची निर्मिती केली, त्यांच्या राज्याचे क्षेत्र बदगाँव, तोरण, मुसह, जसपूर, रामपूर, सूरजूसा, जाजेगिरी पर्यंत होते. केवळ स्वराज्य निर्माण करून ते थांबले नाही तर त्याचे सुराज्यात रूपांतर करण्यासाठी त्याने पचारक, पूरणिक, नायक असे विभाग पाडले.' क्रांतीकारी बिरसाने संघर्षानंतरची उपाययोजना ही या माध्यमातून स्वीकारलेली दिसते.

बिरसाचे राष्ट्रप्रेम-

आपल्या राज्याबद्दल बिरसा म्हणत असे की ही 'भूमी' मुळ आदिवासींच्या मालकी हक्काची आहे. आदिवासींचे पूर्वज हेच भारतातील शासक होते व नंतर विदेशी आर्यांनी भारतात येऊन त्यावर कब्जा मिळविला व आदिवासींची संस्कृती नष्ट केली हे आमचे दुर्दैव आहे.' अशा प्रकारे बिरसाने प्रथम आदिवासींमध्ये आत्मविश्वास निर्माण केला आदिवासी संस्कृती रक्षण चळवळीचा मोठा पाया त्यांनी उभारला. बिरसाचे आंदोलन रोखण्यासाठी पोलिसांनी डोमवारी गावात सामुहिक हत्या केली व त्यामुळे बिरसा हतबल झाले. डोमवारी हत्याकाण्डानंतर पोलिसांनी गावाची घेराबंदी केली व 3 फेब्रुवारी 1900 ला बिरसाने 80 अनुयायांसह शरणागती पत्करली. मात्र तुरुंगात जातांना त्याने आपल्या आदिवासींना उपदेश केला की 'तुम्ही खरेच माझ्यावर प्रेम करत असाल तर परत मागे फिरा आणि आपल्या

अधिकारासाठी सतत संघर्ष करा.'

बिरसाने आपले संपूर्ण आयुष्य आदिवासींच्या समाजाकरीता वेचले. वीर बिरसाचे जीवन मात्र अवघे 25 वर्षांचे होते. पण त्या अल्पशा काळात मात्र ब्रिटीश सरकारला त्याने चिंतेत टाकले होते. मात्र या वीर स्वातंत्र्य वीराची दखल भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य आंदोलनात घेतलेली दिसत नाही. मात्र आदिवासी बांधवांनी त्याला 'धरती आबा' म्हणजे धरतीचा भगवान असे संबोधले आहे. इथे भगवान या शब्दाचा अर्थ ईश्वर नसून जो अनावश्यक विकारांचा समूळ नाश करतो तो भगवान होय असे होतो. या अर्थाने बिरसा ऐतिहासिक व्यक्तीमत्वाच्या गुणांनी परिपूर्ण होता असे म्हणता येईल. त्याची निर्भिकता, धैर्य, स्वाभिमान, श्रुत्व व आपल्या अधिकाराची जाणीव हे गुण प्रशंसनीय होते. त्याने हिन्दुधर्म, बौद्ध धर्माचा अभ्यास केला होता. आणि आदिवासी समूहाला उद्देशून सांगितले की, 'जोपर्यंत आपण मूळ आदिवासी

धर्माप्रमाणे आचरण करीत नाही तोपर्यंत आपले दुःख दूर होणार नाही. एकप्रकारे धार्मिक अवडंबर, अंधश्रद्धाळूपणा, धर्मभोळेपणा यांच्यापासून आपल्या बांधवांना परावृत्त करण्याचे त्याचे प्रयत्न होते. सामाजिक सुधारक म्हणूनही त्यांची प्रतिमा होती. मात्र त्याबद्दलही नोंद झालेली दिसत नाही.

### मूल्यमापन-

राष्ट्रवादाचा अग्रदुत बिरसा मुंडा यांच्या कार्यातून व विचारातून भारतीय संस्कृतीचे उगमस्थान असलेल्या आदिवासी जीवनाची माहिती मिळते. भारताला प्राचीन इतिहासाचा वारसा लाभलेला असून सिंधु संस्कृती बद्दल भरपूर लेखन झालेले दिसते, परंतु या प्राचीन संस्कृतीचे वाहक म्हणजे विविध आदिवासी जमातीच्या संस्कृतीकडे दुर्लक्ष करण्यात आले असल्याचे इतिहास लेखन प्रवाहवरून स्पष्ट होते. जगातील अनेक देशांनी आपल्या प्राचीनतम संस्कृतीचे जतन करण्यासाठी उत्तम

प्रयत्न केलेले लक्षात येते. मात्र भारतीय समाजातील आदिवासी जीवनाची ऐतिहासिक दखल मात्र अल्पप्रमाणात घेतल्या गेलेली आहे. या अर्थाने ऐतिहासिक संशोधन क्षेत्राकडे नवीन दृष्टीने बघण्याची गरज जाणवते.

बिरसा मुंडाचे व्यक्तिमत्व आणि समाजजीवनावरील ऐतिहासिक प्रभाव यांचा समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोणाबरोबर ऐतिहासिक दृष्टीने अभ्यास होणे गरजेचे आहे. बिरसा मुंडाच्या जयन्ती निमित्त त्यांच्या कार्याचे स्मरण करून चालणार नाही तर त्यांची विचारधारा आणि इंग्रजी सत्तेविरुद्ध त्यांनी दिलेला लढा यांचेही यथोचित अध्ययन अपेक्षित आहे. भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य चळवळीच्या इतिहास हा ज्या जननायकांच्या कार्याने गौरविला जातो. त्यामध्ये बिरसा मुंडा यांचेही योगदान उल्लेखनीय ठरते. परंतु संप्रदाय, धर्म, भाषा आणि जातीच्या बंधनात अडकलेल्या, ऐतिहासिक लेखनात त्यांची दखल फक्त आपल्या बांधवासाठी



लढणारा नेता या अर्थाने घेतल्या गेली आहे, म्हणजेच त्यांच्या कार्याला चौकट घालण्याचा प्रयत्न झालेला दिसतो. म्हणून काही सूचना या संदर्भात मांडता येतात, त्यावर विचार करणे अपेक्षित आहे.

- राष्ट्रीय स्तरावर शैक्षणिक अभ्यासक्रमातून आदिवासी नेत्यांचे कार्य शिकविणे गरजेचे आहे.
- राष्ट्रीय स्तरावरील इतिहासलेखनातून व वैचारिक, अभिव्यक्तीतून त्यांचे विचार समाजासमोर आल्यास आदिवासी संस्कृतीचा इतिहास परंपरा यांची माहिती नवीन पीढीला होईल..
- आदिवासी समाजजीवन आणि भारतीय संस्कृती यामधील समन्वय सहसंबंध यावर प्रबोधनाची आवश्यकता आहे. कारण त्याशिवाय

संदर्भ -

- 1) बिरसामुंडा, मेश्राम योगराज, सुधीर प्रकाशन, वर्धा
- 2) आदिवासी महानायकांचे चरित्र, मडावी शेषराव, सुधीर प्रकाशन, वर्धा

सांस्कृतिक एकरूपता प्रस्थापित करता येणार नाही.

- धर्म, जात, पंथ, प्रदेश, भाषा, वंश हा भेद न स्वीकारता प्रत्येक भारतीय नागरिकाने आपल्या देशाच्या स्वातंत्र्यासाठी ज्यांनी मोलाचे योगदान दिले त्यांचा अभ्यास करण्यासाठी प्रेरित केले तर खऱ्या अर्थाने बिरसा मुंडांना ती आदरांजली दिली जाईल. ऐतिहासिक व्यक्तिमत्व आणि जननायक या दृष्टीने स्थानिक इतिहास लेखनातून आदिवासी समाजावर विचारमंथन अपेक्षित आहे.
- ऐतिहासिक विचार प्रवाहातून बिरसामुंडाचे कार्य अभ्यासले गेल्यास स्वातंत्र्य आंदोलनाची सुरवात व विकास यावरही नवीन संशोधन होण्याची संधी मिळेल.

## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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## नागवंशीय आदिवासी बिरसा मुंडा आणि बौद्धधम्म

डॉ. प्रशांत बोबडे

कला, वाणिज्य व विज्ञान महाविद्यालय  
तळोदा, ता. तळोदा, जि. नंदुरबार

### प्रस्तावना:

ऋग्वेदामधील पुरुष सुक्तात जगाची उत्पत्ती कशी झाली हे सांगणारा सिद्धांत आहे. पुरुष सुक्तामध्ये अकरा व बाराव्या श्लोकात मानवाची उत्पत्ती कशी झाली, हे सांगितले आहे. विश्वजनकाच्या तोंडातून ब्राम्हण, बाहुपासून क्षत्रिय, मांड्यापासून वैश्य व पायापासून शुद्र जन्माला आले असे सांगितले गेले. सुरुवातीला ब्राम्हण, क्षत्रिय व वैश्य असे तीनच वर्ण सांगितले होते. परंतु नंतर सूर्यवंशीय क्षत्रियापासून शुद्र बनवून त्यांनाही हीन लेखले गेले. म्हणजे शुद्राची निर्मिती क्षत्रियापासून झाली. हे 'शुद्र पूर्वी कोण होते?' या ग्रंथात डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकरांनी सांगितले आहे. परंतु या जाती व्यतिरिक्त भारतीय समाजात असलेल्या १) आदिवासी जमाती, २)

गुन्हेगार समजल्या जाणाऱ्या भटक्या जमाती, ३) अस्पृश्य समजल्या जाणाऱ्या महार व इतर जाती. यांचा समावेश चातुर्वर्ण्य व्यवस्थेत कोठेच नाही. त्यांची उत्पत्ती कशी झाली? त्यांचा धर्म कोणता? या संदर्भात पुरुष सुक्तात कोणतीही माहिती नाही.

### आदिवासी समूह उत्पत्ती:

भारतातील आदिवासी हे बौद्ध धर्मीय होते. कारण बौद्ध धर्माच्या पाऊलखुणा आजही आदिवासी समाजात टिकून आहेत. उदा. आदिवासींची निसर्गपूजा, देव न मानणे, त्यांच्यातील समता, बंधुभाव, मातृसत्ताक कुटुंब पद्धती इ. ज्याप्रमाणे भारतातील असंख्य जाती समुहाचा पुर्वाश्रमीचा धर्म हा बौद्ध धम्म होता. आर्य-अनार्य यांच्या संघर्षात तसेच वर्ण व्यवस्था व जाती व्यवस्थेला

कंटाळून बहुसंख्य जाती समुहांनी इतर धर्मात धर्मांतर केले. जसे की, मध्ययुगीन कालखंडात मुस्लिम राजवटीमध्ये इस्लाम धर्म स्वीकारला गेला. ब्रिटीशांच्या राजवटीत ख्रिश्चन धर्म स्वीकारला गेला. परंतु ज्या जाती समुहांनी कोणताही धर्म स्वीकारला नाही, त्यांना एकतर अस्पृश्य बनविले गेले किंवा त्यांना त्यांच्या मुळ भूमीवरून जंगल-पहाडात हाकलून लावले.

आता हे सर्वमान्य झाले आहे की, आर्य हे बाहेरून आलेले आक्रमणकारी लोक होते. आर्यांनी भारताच्या 'सप्तसिंधु' प्रदेशात साधारणतः इ.स.पूर्व २००० मध्ये प्रवेश केला. सप्तसिंधु प्रदेश म्हणजे ज्या भागातून सिंधू, झेलम, चिनाब, रावी, बियास, सतलज व सरस्वती या सात नद्या वाहतात. त्याला सप्तसिंधु प्रदेश म्हटले जाते. आर्यांनी अनार्यांचे दमन केले आणि त्यांना त्यांच्या भूमीवरून हाकलून लावले. आर्यांनी अनार्यांना पराजीत करून त्यांना दक्षिणेकडे म्हणजेच आजच्या मध्य भारतात जंगल व डोंगराळ भागात,

नदी-नाल्यात हाकलून दिले. आणि सप्तसिंधु प्रदेशात आर्यांनी निवास करून अनेक टोळ्यांनी आपली लहान-मोठी राज्ये स्थापन केली. याचा अर्थ आर्यांनी भारतातील मुळ निवासी आदिवासी समाजावर आक्रमण केले. आणि अंततः आदिवासी समाजाला सुपिक जमीन सोडून जंगलात पळून जावे लागले.

इतिहासामध्ये आदिवासी लोक हे असुर संस्कृतीला माणणारे होते. लिंगबोंगा म्हणजे प्रकाशाची देवता. याला ते मान्यता देत होते. ही असुर संस्कृती म्हणजेच मुलनिवासी लोकांची नागवंशी संस्कृती आहे. ही संस्कृती वर्णविहीन, जातीविहीन समाजव्यवस्था आहे. याचा आधार समता, स्वतंत्रता, बंधुता आणि न्याय यावर आधारलेला समाज आणि राष्ट्र असा आहे. ही संस्कृती वैदिक म्हणजेच ब्राम्हणी धर्माला नाकारणारी आहे. त्या संस्कृतीमध्ये सर्वात श्रेष्ठ म्हणजे धर्माची संकल्पना प्रकृती आणि विज्ञानावर आधारलेली आहे. अशा

नैसर्गिक प्रकृती आणि विज्ञानावर आधारीत असलेल्या संस्कृतीमध्ये आदिवासी तयार झाला. उपरोक्त उतारातील समता, स्वतंत्रता, बंधुता आणि न्याय या संकल्पना बुद्धाच्या शिकवणीतील असून त्रिपीटकातील ग्रंथात सर्वत्र या संकल्पनांची शिकवणूक दिसून येते.

### नागवंश आणि बौद्धधम्म संबंध:

आज संपूर्ण भारतात आदिवासींच्या वंश व धर्माबद्दल अनेक मतभेद आहेत. काहींच्या मते आदिवासींचा कोणताही धर्म नाही. तर काहींच्या मते आदिवासींचा निसर्ग धर्म आहे. काही आदिवासी वन्यधर्म म्हणतात, तर काही आदिवासी गोंडीधर्म सांगतात. काही आदिवासी बिरसाई धर्म सांगतात. तर काही आदिवासी ख्रिश्चन धर्म लावतात. परंतु आजही अनेक आदिवासी, कार्यकर्ते आम्ही हिंदू नाहीत हे ठामपणे सांगतात. परंतु मानवसमाज धर्माशिवाय राहू शकत नाही, हे डॉ.बाबासाहेब

आंबेडकरांनी बौद्धधर्माचा स्वीकार करून दाखवून दिले. म्हणून आजच्या आदिवासींचा कोणता धर्म होता? हा प्रश्न निर्माण होतो.

भगवान गौतम बुद्धाचे कुल हे शाक्य होते व ते नागवंशीय होते. गौतम बुद्धाची आई कोलिय होती. ती सुद्धा नागवंशीय होती. ज्या ठिकाणी भगवान बुद्धाला ज्ञानप्राप्ती झाली त्या बुद्धगयेत गयासूर नावाचा असूर राजा राज्य करीत होता. त्याच्या नावावरून 'गया' हे नगर वसले. हा राजा असूर संस्कृतीचा असून नागवंशीय होता. म्हणून बौद्धगयेचा संबंध पूर्वीच्या नागवंशीय लोकांशी आहे. भगवान बुद्धांनी तपश्चर्या करते वेळी, वादळ, वारा, पाऊस यापासून संरक्षण करण्यासाठी 'मुलचिंद' नावाचा 'नाग' साप तेथे आला आणि भगवान बुद्धाचे वादळ वार्यापासून संरक्षण केले. त्याची स्मृती म्हणून आजही बुद्धगयेत बुद्धमूर्तीच्या पाठीमागे फणा उभारलेली मूर्ती आहे. यामधील काल्पनिक भाग वगळता

भगवान बुद्धांचा 'नाग', 'नागवंश' यांच्याशी संबंध आहे. अशाप्रकारे बौद्धधर्माच्या संस्थापकाचा संबंध नागवंशाशी आहे. भगवान बुद्ध हे महान क्रांतीकारक होते. भगवान बुद्धांच्या धम्म प्रचारानंतर भारतातील अनेक नागवंशीय राजे आणि प्रजेने बौद्ध धर्माचा स्वीकार केलेला दिसून येतो. त्यामध्ये भारतीय मुळनिवासी शुद्र व अतिशुद्रांचे जे राजे होते, ते चंद्रगुप्त मौर्य, सम्राट अशोक, समुद्रगुप्त, हर्षवर्धन हे सर्व राजे नागवंशीय होते. या सर्व राजांनी बौद्धधम्म स्वीकारला होता. आज भारतात केरळ, ओरीसा, मध्यप्रदेश, महाराष्ट्र, उत्तरप्रदेश, झारखंड, उत्तरांचल, छत्तीसगड, आसाम, मिझोराम, नागालॅण्ड, अरुणाचल प्रदेश, त्रिपुरा, मणीपूर इत्यादी राज्यात नागवंशीय आदिवासींची वस्ती आहे.

## मुंडा आदिवासी:

प्राचीन भारतातील शिक्षणाचा अधिकार हा ब्राम्हणांशिवाय कोणालाही

नव्हता. त्यामुळे त्यांनी जो इतिहास लिहिला तोच खरा मानला गेला. इतर आदिवासींप्रमाणे मुंडा आदिवासींचा इतिहास सुद्धा असाच खोटा लिहिला गेला. परंतु अलीकडे हा इतिहास उजागर होत आहे. त्यांना जरी जंगलात जाण्यास भाग पाडले गेले, परंतु त्यांनी मानवी मुल्ये अद्यापही जोपासलेली आहेत. त्यांच्या जीवनमुल्यावरून त्यांची धार्मिक मान्यता, सामाजिक परंपरा यावरून मुंडा आदिवासी हे मागासलेले लोक नसून बौद्ध संस्कृतीशी त्यांचा संबंध होता. आजही मुंडा लोक जे सण-उत्सव साजरे करतात, त्यांची पुजापाठ, खाणे-पिणे हे सर्व बौद्ध संस्कृतीशी जुळताना दिसते. भगवान बुद्धाची जी शिकवण आहे, त्याचे अनुसरण करणारे हे मुंडा लोक आहेत. ते खऱ्या अर्थाने बुद्धाचे अनुयायी आहेत.

## मुंडा या शब्दाचा अर्थ:

पंजाबी भाषेत मुंडा म्हणजे मुलगा, हिमाचल प्रदेशात मुंडाचे अनेक अर्थ

आहेत. परंतु मुंडा लोक किंवा समाजाबद्दल सांगायचे म्हणजे मुंडा हे बौद्धधर्मीय असल्याने मुण्डक किंवा मुंड या शब्दापासून मुंडा या जातीवाचक शब्दाची व्युत्पत्ती झाली आहे. भदंत आनंद कौशल्यायन यांनी पाली-हिंदी शब्दकोशात मुंडकाचा अर्थ बालरहीत मुंडीत सीरवाला असे दिले आहे. मुंड म्हणजे केस नसलेले, मुंडन केलेले डोके. बुद्धाच्या काळात बौद्ध भिक्खु हे मुंडन करून ताम्रवस्त्र परिधान करून वावरत असत. आजही भिक्खु मुंडन करतात. बुद्धाच्या काळी ब्राम्हण लोक बौद्ध भिक्खुंना पाहून रागाने किंवा अपमानाने 'मुण्डक' म्हणत होते. याचा उल्लेख त्रिपीटकात आलेला आहे. यावरून असे स्पष्ट होते, की मुंडा शब्द 'मुण्डक' या शब्दाचा अपभ्रंश आहे. त्यामुळे मुंडा आदिवासीचे पूर्वज बौद्धधर्मीय होते म्हणून त्यांना मुंडा अस म्हटले जाते.

**बौद्ध धर्मातील संदर्भ:**

आजच्या मुंडा समाजात जे काही धार्मिक विधी किंवा सामाजिक रितीरिवाज जे 'पाहण' म्हणून ओळखल्या जाणाऱ्या पुजाराकडून केले जातात. पाहण शब्द पालीभाषेतील 'पाहूण' किंवा 'पाहुन्नेयो' या शब्दाचा अपभ्रंश असू शकतो. पाहुन्नेयो या शब्दाचा अर्थ अतिथी भेट किंवा अतिथींचे स्वागत करण्यास योग्य असा होतो. आजच्या बौद्धधर्माच्या पुजा विधीमध्ये संघवंदनेत 'आहुन्नेयो पाहुन्नेयो' असे शब्द आहेत. पाहण हा शब्द बौद्धधर्माशी संबंधित असलेला शब्द आहे. आजच्या मुंडा जातीच्या परंपरेनुसार प्रत्येक व्यक्ती 'पाहण' (पुजारी) होवू शकत नाही. त्यासाठी त्यांना पाच निवारणांचे पालन करावे लागते. हे पाच निवारण म्हणजे १)काम वासना, २)व्यापाद, ३)थीनमिप, ४)विचिकिच्छा, ५)उददज कुकुच्च हे होत. जी व्यक्ती या पाच गोष्टी निशिद्ध मानते, तीच व्यक्ती मुंडा लोकांचा पुढारी, नेता किंवा पुजारी होवू शकतो. आजचे

मुंडा लोक आपल्या भाषेप्रमाणे वरिल शब्दाचा उच्चार करतात. आणि महत्वाचे म्हणजे बौद्धधम्मातील त्रिपीटकात वरील शब्दांचा संदर्भ आलेला आहे. त्रिपीटकातील दिघ्घनिकायात महासतीपठ्ठाण सुत्तात हे पाचही शब्द धर्माचे पालन करण्यासंदर्भात आलेले आहेत. बुद्धाने कुरु देशातील कुरु लोकांना कायानुपस्सना, वेदनानुपस्सना, चित्तानुपस्सना, धर्मानुपस्सना या संदर्भात उपदेश केलेला आहे. धर्मानुपस्सनामधील पाच निवारणांचे पालन करण्यास भगवान बुद्धांनी भिक्खुंना सांगितले आहे. ते पाच निवारण आहेत-

१) कामच्छंद - कामुकता

२) व्यापाद - द्रोह

३) स्त्यान मृद्ध - (थीन-मीद्ध-शरीर मनकी अलसता)

४) औद्धत्य कौकृत्य - उद्धचच कूक्कूच-उद्वेग-खेद

५) विचिकित्सा - संशय

या पाचही निवारणाचे पालन मुंडा समाजातील लोक करतात. बुद्धाच्या

कालखंडानंतर अनेक स्थित्यंतरे घडून आली आहेत. अनेक राजे होवून गेलेत. धर्मांमध्ये घुसडण झाली. धर्मा-धम्मामध्ये संघर्ष झाले. जाती व्यवस्था निर्माण झाली. अस्पृश्यता निर्माण झाली. पुण्यमित्राच्या कालखंडात बौद्ध भिक्खुवर अत्याचार झालेत. पुण्यमित्र शृंगाने एक फतवा काढला होता की, जो बौद्ध भिक्खुचे एक मुण्डकं आणून देईल त्याला शंभर सुवर्णमुद्रा देण्यात येतील. त्या भितीमुळे बौद्ध भिक्खुंनी अनेक ठिकाणी स्थलांतर केलेत. काही जंगलात पळून गेले. त्या भिक्खुंचा संबंध मुंडा आदिवासींशी असेल का?

भारत देशाचा इतिहास हा आर्य-अनार्य यांच्या संघर्षाचा इतिहास आहे. धर्म आणि धम्म यांचा संघर्षाचा इतिहास आहे. आजही आदिवासी हिंदु धर्मातील देव-ईश्वर यांना मानत नाहीत. हिंदु धर्मातील सण-उत्सव मानत नाहीत. आणि आम्ही हिंदु नाहीत हे आजही आदिवासी ठामपणे सांगतात. भगवान



बुद्धाच्या कालखंडाला आज एवढा प्रदिर्घ कालावधी म्हणजे २५८४ वर्ष होवून गेलेत. तरी सुद्धा मुंडा आदिवासी समाजामध्ये बुद्धाची शिकवण त्यांनी त्यांच्या जीवनमुल्याच्या स्वरूपात टिकवून ठेवली. यावरून मुंडा आदिवासींचा धर्म हा बौद्धधम्म होता, असे स्पष्ट होते.

मुंडा समाजामध्ये 'सरणा' पुजा केली जाते. सरणा पुजेत ते कोणत्याही मूर्तीची पुजा न करता ते शालवृक्षाची पुजा करतात. बौद्धधम्मामध्ये शालवृक्षाचा संदर्भ असून बुद्धाच्या जीवनकाळातच शालवृक्षा संदर्भात काही घटना घडलेल्या आहेत. बौद्धधम्मामध्ये त्रिशरण-पंचशील म्हटले जाते. सरणा पुजा आणि त्रिशरण यांचा संबंध दिसून येतो. या व्यतिरिक्त मुंडा आदिवासीमध्ये मुंडा यात्रेचे आयोजन होते. या यात्रेत लाकडाची किंवा कोळशाची आग केली जाते. व ती पायाने विझविली जाते. ही परंपरा इतरही आदिवासीत शेकडो वर्षांपासून आहे. यामधील ऐतिहासिक सत्य असे आहे की,

पुश्यमित्र शृंगाने त्याच्या कालखंडात फार मोठा अश्वमेध यज्ञ करून असंख्य पशूंना यज्ञात बळी दिले होते. हजारो बौद्ध भिक्खुंची हत्या केली होती. त्याचा निषेध म्हणून मुंडा आदिवासी मुंडा यात्रेत अग्नी पेटवून तो पायांनी खुंदून-खुंदून विझवितात.

मुंडा आदिवासीमध्ये कर्मपुजेला महत्त्व आहे. बौद्ध धम्मामध्ये कर्माला विशेष महत्त्व आहे. बौद्धधम्मातील लोकं भाग्यवादी किंवा ईश्वरवादी नाहीत. भगवान बुद्धाच्या शिकवणुकीप्रमाणे दुःखाचे निवारण करण्यासाठी कर्माची किंवा कर्तव्याची आवश्यकता आहे. मुंडा लोकांमध्ये सुद्धा कर्मावर विश्वास ठेवून चांगले कर्म करण्याची परंपरा हजारो वर्षांपासून टिकून आहे.

### बिरसा मुंडाचा कालावधी:

बिरसा मुंडाचा जन्म १५ नोव्हेंबर १८७५ साली झाला. आईचे नाव करमी हातू आणि वडिलांचे नाव सुगाना मुंडा. तिघे भाऊ, दोन बहिणी आणि आई-वडिल

असं सात व्यक्तीचं कुटूंब. बाम्बु आणि गवतापासून बनविलेली एक झोपडी. खुंटीगाव येथे मावशीकडे शाळेत गेल्यावर बिरसा मुंडा शिक्षण घेत-घेत फावल्या वेळात मावशीच्या शेळ्या चारायचं काम सुद्धा करत असे. शेळ्यांनी दुसऱ्यांच्या शेतात जावून नासाडी केली तरी बिरसा मुंडा स्वतःत तल्लीन असायचा. म्हणून मावशीने त्याला गावी परत पाठविले. बिरसाला मावशीच्या घरून परत आल्यानंतर सालगा या गावी जयपाल यांच्या आश्रमात शिक्षणासाठी पाठविले. त्यानंतर बूर्ज येथील जर्मन मिशनरी शाळेतून पूर्व प्राथमिक पर्यंतचं शिक्षण प्राप्त केलं. पुढे चाईबासाच्या जी.ई.एल.मिडल स्कूलमधून १८८६-८७ मध्ये त्यांनी उच्च प्राथमिक पर्यंतचे शिक्षण पूर्ण केले. जसजसं बिरसाचे वय वाढायला लागलं, तशी त्यांना आजुबाजुच्या परिस्थितीची जाणीव व्हायला लागली. आदिवासींच्या समस्या कळायला लागल्या. चारही बाजूंनी

आदिवासी समाज नाडला जातोय, याची जाणीव झाली.

### बिरसाचे आंदोलन:

हजारो वर्षांपासून चालत आलेलं हिंदु धर्माचं वर्चस्व, इंग्रजांच्या आशीर्वादाने स्वदेशी शेत-सावकार, जमीनदार, व्यापारी यांच्याकडून होणारी पिळवणूक, ख्रिस्ती मिशनऱ्यांचं आक्रमक, धार्मिक धोरण आणि इंग्रजांनी लादलेली गुलामगिरी या सर्वांच्यामध्ये आदिवासी समाज दुबळा होत आहे, हे बिरसांनी जाणलं. या आधी आदिवासींचे रोग आणि अंधश्रद्धा निर्मुलनानिमित्त त्यांनी संघटन सुरु केलं होतं. हळूहळू त्यांनी लोकांना या सर्व परिस्थितीची कल्पना देवून आंदोलनासाठी लोकशक्ती एकत्र केली. आणि सर्वप्रथम स्वदेशी शेत-सावकार, जमीनदार, व्यापारी, ठेकेदार यांच्यावर हल्ला करून आंदोलनाला सुरुवात केली. इंग्रजांच्या विरोधात सुद्धा बिरसा मुंडांनी आंदोलन चालविले.

### बिरसाची शिकवण:

आदिवासी समाजातील वाईट प्रथा, अंधश्रद्धा नष्ट करण्यासाठी बिरसांनी सर्वप्रथम प्रयत्न केले. आदिवासींमध्ये सुधारणा करायची असेल तर आधी त्यांच्यातील दोष म्हणजे भूतप्रेताविषयीच्या कल्पना, आरोग्य, देवदेवता या विषयीच्या अंधश्रद्धा नष्ट केल्या पाहिजेत. त्यासाठी बिरसांनी आदिवासींशी संपर्क वाढविला. तंत्रमंत्राचा धाक दाखवून आदिवासींना फसविणार्या भगतांचं प्राबल्य कमी करण्यासाठी बिरसाने वनौषधींच्या आधारे लोकांना रोगमुक्त करायला सुरुवात केली. समस्या सोडवायला लोक बिरसा मुंडाकडे यायचे. त्यामुळे त्या प्रदेशात बिरसा मुंडाची खूप प्रसिद्धी झाली. लोकांचा बिरसावर विश्वास बसला. बिरसा मुंडा लोकांना पुढीलप्रमाणे उपदेश करायचे-

- १) आपण स्वच्छ रहायला पाहिजे.
- २) आपण मिळून-मिसळून प्रेमाने वागायला पाहिजे.
- ३) कोणीही चोरी करू नये.

- ४) कोणीही खोटं बोलू नये.
- ५) मुक्या प्राण्यांची हत्या करू नये.
- ६) भिक मागू नये.
- ७) भूत-प्रेत, पिशाच्च यावर विश्वास ठेवू नये.
- ८) दारु आणि इतर नशिल्या पदार्थांचे सेवन करू नये.
- ९) आपसात बंधुता आणि समानतेने व्यवहार करावेत.
- १०) आपण मुंग्यांप्रमाणे उद्योगशील आणि संघटीत रहावे.
- ११) जे लोक उद्योगशील आणि साहसी असतात, ते सुपिक जमीनीप्रमाणे उपयोगी असतात. आणि जे लोक आळशी आणि भित्रे असतात ते काटेरी झुडपे असलेल्या ओसाड माळरानाप्रमाणे निरुपयोगी असतात.
- वरिल बिरसा मुंडाच्या उपदेशाचे बौद्धधर्मातील शिकवणुकीशी काय साम्य आहे? हे प्रत्येक मुद्याची बौद्ध शिकवणुकीशी तुलना करून पाहता येईल.

- १) आपण स्वच्छ रहायला पाहीजे: समादियामी' म्हणजे मी जीव हिंसेपासून स्वच्छता आणि आरोग्य या संदर्भात अलिप्त राहण्याची प्रतिज्ञा करतो.
- २) आपण मिळून-मिसळून प्रेमाने ६) भिक मागू नये: कष्ट करून भगवान बुद्धांनी भिक्खुंना अनेकदा सन्मानपूर्वक जीवन जगले पाहीजे. याचा उपदेश केलेले आहेत. उल्लेख दिग्ध निकायातील सीगालोवाद सुतात तसेच अंगुत्तर निकायात आलेला आहे.
- ३) कोणीही चारी करू नये: बौद्ध धर्माच्या पुजा विधीत पंचशील आहे. त्यामध्ये दुसरे शील असे आहे- ७) भूतप्रेत, पिशाच यावर विश्वास ठेवू नये: भगवान बुद्धांच्या शिकवणुकीमध्ये आत्मा नाकारला आहे. आणि अनात्मवादाचा सिद्धांत सांगितला आहे.
- ४) कोणीही खोट बोलू नये: पंचशीलामध्ये चौथे शील असे आहे - 'मुसावादा वेरमणी-सिक्खापदं समादियामी' याचा अर्थ मी चोरी करण्यापासून अलिप्त राहण्याची प्रतिज्ञा करतो असा होतो. ८) दारू आणि इतर नशिल्या पदार्थांचे सेवन करू नये: पंचशीलामध्ये पाचवे शील आहे - 'सुरा-मेरय-मज्ज-पमादठ्ठाणा वेरमणी-सिक्खापदं समादियामी' म्हणजे मी मद्य, तसेच मोहात पाडणार्या इतर सर्व मादक वस्तूंच्या सेवनापासून अलिप्त राहण्याची प्रतिज्ञा करतो.
- ५) मुक्या प्राण्यांची हत्या करू नये: पंचशीलामध्ये प्रथम शील असे आहे - 'पाणातिपाता वेरमणी--सिक्खापदं ९) आपसात बंधुता आणि समानतेने व्यवहार करावेत: बौद्ध धर्माच्या शिकवणुकीमध्ये समता, स्वातंत्र्य आणि बंधुता या तीन तत्वांना खूप महत्त्व आहे.

आणि या तीनही तत्वांचा डॉ.बाबासाहेब आंबेडकरांनी भारतीय राज्य घटनेत समावेश केलेला आहे.

१०) आपण मुंग्यांप्रमाणे उद्योगशील आणि संघटीत रहावे: बौद्ध धम्माच्या त्रिपीटकामध्ये दिघ्घनिकाय हा स्वतंत्र ग्रंथ आहे. दिघ्घनिकायाच्या सिगालोवाद सुत्तात भगवान बुद्धाने सिगाल नावाच्या गृहपती पुत्राला पुढीलप्रमाणे उपदेश केलेला आहे- भोगे सहरमानस्स, भमरस्सेव इरीयतो। भोगा सन्निचयं यन्ती, वम्मीकोवुपचीयती॥ म्हणजे - अर्थार्जन करा, मधमाश्यासारखे जी फुलाला दुखवत नाही, मानसाने ढिग तयार करावा, वारूळ जसे हळूहळू तयार होते. बिरसा मुंडा आपल्या आदिवासी बांधवांना, आपल्या सहकार्यांना जो उपदेश देतात, तो उपदेश भगवान बुद्धांनी २५०० वर्षांपूर्वी सांगितलेला आहे. अशाप्रकारे बिरसा मुंडावर आणि इतर आदिवासी समाजावर आजही बुद्धांच्या शिकवणुकीचा प्रभाव आहे. त्यामुळे मुंडा

आदिवासी व त्यांचे पुर्वज हे बौद्ध धर्मीय होते, हे स्पष्ट होते.

**सारांश:**

साधारणतः २५०० वर्षांपूर्वीपासून जंगल, पहाडात राहिल्यामुळे मुंडा आदिवासी आपल्या प्राचीन बौद्ध संस्कृतीला विसरले असावेत. त्यांचे पूर्वज बौद्ध होते, याची जाणीवच मुंडा आदिवासींना राहिलेली नाही. त्यांच्यामध्ये गणतंत्र पद्धती कशी आली? गणतंत्र म्हणजे काय? ते त्रिशरण आणि पंचशीलाचे तत्त्व का पाळतात? याची पुसटशी कल्पना सुद्धा त्यांना राहिलेली नाही. परंतु बुद्धाच्या शिकवणुकीची काही तत्त्वे त्यांनी आपल्या जीवनमुल्याच्या स्वरूपात टिकवून ठेवली. त्यामुळे मुंडा आदिवासी व बिरसा मुंडा यांचे पूर्वज बौद्ध होते, त्यांनी बौद्ध काळात बौद्ध धम्माचा स्वीकार केला होता. असे स्पष्ट दिसून येते.

**निष्कर्ष:**

## Life and Movements of Birsa Munda

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- १) भगवान बुद्ध हे नागकुळातील असून त्यांचा परिवार नागवंशीय होता.
- २) बुद्धगयेचा गयासूर नावाचा राजा होता. व तो असूर असून नागवंशीय होता. त्याच्याच नावावरून त्या गावाला 'गया' हे नाव पडले.
- ३) सर्व नागवंशीय आदिवासी बौद्ध धर्मीय होते.
- ४) भारतात बहुतेक राज्यात आदिवासींचे वास्तव्य आहे. या सर्व आदिवासींचे पूर्वज बुद्ध, अशोक, सातवाहन काळात बौद्ध धर्मीय होते.
- ५) मिना, बोडो, मुंडा, चेरा, माना आदिवासी हे सर्व प्रकारचे आदिवासी नागवंशीय व बौद्ध धर्मीय होते. आर्यांनी त्यांचा अतोनात छळ करून त्यांना जंगलात व नापिकी डोंगराळ प्रदेशात हाकलून दिले.
- ६) मातृसत्ताक कुटुंब पद्धती असणारे लोक हे आदिवासी नागवंशीय लोक आहेत.
- ७) आदिवासी हे हिंदू नाहीत.
- ८) क्रांती-प्रतीक्रांतीच्या संघर्षात बौद्ध धर्माचा र्हास झाला.

संदर्भ:

- १) डॉ.बाबासाहेब आंबेडकर - शुद्ध पूर्वी कोण होते?
- २) गोकुळदास मेश्राम - आदिवासी सिंधु संस्कृतीचे वारसदार व त्यांचा धर्म.
- ३) शंकर बळी - उलगुलान आदिवासी संस्कृती व हक्कासाठी.
- ४) प्रा.गौतम निकम - क्रांतीकारी आदिवासी जननायक.
- ५) डॉ.गोविंद गारे - आदिवासी समस्या आणि बदलते संदर्भ.
- ६) राहुल सांस्कृत्यायन/जगदिश कश्यप - दिग्घनिकाय.
- ७) राजदिप आगळे (संपा.) - आदिवासी अर्थात मुलनिवासी महानायक.
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- १०) डॉ.जयंतीलाल एल. बामनिया - आदिवासी समाज का इतिहास.

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*Birsa Munda led the Ulgulan (resistance by Adivasis) against the British capture of land and forests in present day Jharkhand. This movement (1899-1900) won legal protection of land rights and banned forced labour. Millions of Adivasis commemorate his birth anniversary each year.*



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“मैं केवल देह नहीं  
मैं जंगल का पुश्तैनी दावेदार हूँ  
पुश्तें और उनके दावे मरते नहीं  
मैं भी मर नहीं सकता  
मुझे कोई भी जंगलों से  
बेदखल नहीं कर सकता  
उलगुलान!  
उलगुलान!!  
उलगुलान!!!”  
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