Rebellion in the Raj

THE WOMEN WHO FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM



Chapter 1:
The Murmu Sisters

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1855. Santhal Pargana. Eastern India.

A tribal uprising was simmering in the Rajmahal Hills of Jharkhand. The Santhals, a peaceful tribal community, faced oppression by the ruthless British revenue collectors and corrupt moneylenders. Picking up their bows and arrows, they struck back with a force that the British never saw coming.

This became known in history as the Santhal Hūl. 'Hūl' is a Santhali word that means 'uprising'. At the frontline were the Murmu Brothers, Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav. However, standing right beside them, wielding axes and unmatched defiance, were their two sisters.



Two sisters. One rebellion.
A forgotten chapter of India's resistance.

When the call to revolt came, Phulo and Jhano Murmu did not lag behind. They walked right into the crossfire, becoming enduring symbols of courage and resistance.

They slipped into a British military camp in the dark of the night and used their axes (tangi) to kill twenty-one enemy soldiers before being captured.

They did not surrender; they sacrificed their lives for Jal, Jangal, Jameen (Water, Forest, Land).



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Hūl Diwas

On June 30, 1855, around 50,000 Santhals gathered at Bhagnadihi village to declare independence from British exploitation. In the brutal military crackdown that followed, over 15,000 tribal freedom fighters laid down their lives.

Hūl Diwas is celebrated every year on June 30th to honour those who rose up in the Santhal Hūl (Rebellion) of 1855.

The uprising forced the British authorities to recognize the grievances of the Santhals. In 1876, the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act was introduced to protect the land rights of the Santhals and prevent further exploitation by landlords and moneylenders.



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Phulo and Jhano Murmu remind us that our fight for freedom began long ago, not just in cities but also in villages and forests. And on the frontline, were the common people who found in themselves the courage to fight for their country.

Follow us as we take you through a journey, uncovering the forgotten lives of the women who fought for freedom.

