



# Shaheed Jayee Rajguru

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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI

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The life of Shaheed Jayee Rajguru is a shining example of rare courage, steely determination and selfless sacrifice. A deep sense of patriotism and intense antagonism towards foreign rule were essential elements of his personality. He was one of the first to resist the British rule in Khurda in Orissa. For his courage of conviction and opposition to alien domination, he had to make the supreme sacrifice when he was executed by the British in 1806.

Jayee Rajguru was born on 29 October 1739 in a prominent and scholarly family in the village Bira Harekrushnapur, near Puri in Orissa. His forefathers were advisors and spiritual teachers to the King of Khurda and were traditionally called "Rajguru". Originally named Jayakrishna Mohapatra, he came to be popularly known as Jayee Rajguru after his appointment as "Rajguru" to the King of Khurda after the death of his father Chand Rajguru.

When the race for succession ensued after the death of the ruling King of Khurda Dibyasingha Deb-II, Jayee Rajguru ensured the accession of the late King's minor son Mukund Deb-II to the throne of Khurda. As the King was a minor, Jayee Rajguru became the Regent and took the actual control of the affairs of the state into his hands in 1798. In this capacity, he introduced many changes in the administrative system; he also took several social measures to uplift the sagging morale of the states' soldiers.

Jayee Rajguru was an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and intellectual of the 18th century. Upholding the tradition of the Sanskrit learning of his forefathers, he mastered the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and other scriptures in the early years of his life. He could write thousands

of *shlokas* with ease and was an acclaimed *Vidwan* among the pundits. His keen and ceaseless interest in the study of Sanskrit earned for him the reputation of an erudite scholar in Sanskrit literature. He also read most of the Hindu religious scriptures as well as those of other religions. The '*Ramayana*', the '*Harivamsa*' and other epics of Hinduism greatly influenced his ideas and thoughts. Jayee Rajguru was of the opinion that justice was the foremost religion, and he strictly followed the path of justice throughout his life.

After the British forces attacked Orissa and occupied its major pockets in 1803, they issued notice to the rulers of smaller kingdoms to accept subjugation and pay taxes to the British treasury. As per the advice of Jayee Rajguru, the King of Khurda never signed the notice. Realizing the imminent danger of war with the Britishers, he prepared the army for such an eventuality and appealed to the people to get ready for sacrifice to save their Motherland. He also enlisted the support of other neighbouring kingdoms by unifying them for a combined defence strategy against the British forces. Soon, his efforts took the form of a mass movement with every household contributing a soldier, trained in different war skills, and people grouping themselves under his leadership.

Jayee Rajguru was a forceful speaker too. Through his fiery speeches, he could inspire his audience with burning patriotism. He moved from place-to-place to organize secret societies. He also trained people in the art of warfare and advocated a violent revolution against the British conquerors.

Jayee Rajguru attacked the British forces in 1804 on the banks of the river Mahanadi and with this news spreading far and wide, many such attacks followed on the British troops at various places. Having suffered a severe setback at the hands of the Rajguru's forces, the Britishers called in additional battalions to reinforce their strength. The final battle,

the 'Battle of Barunei', took place in December 1804 at the foothills of the Barunei mountain between the British and the soldiers led by Jayee Rajguru. The fort was seized for three days and in a fiercely fought battle, a handful of Rajguru's soldiers in the fort fought gallantly against the 7,000-strong British army. The battle skill, valour and sacrifices of Jayee Rajguru and his followers are remembered by the people of India even today.

In such a scenario, the Britishers resorted to the "divide and rule" policy by tempting a few of the locals by offering large tax-free land holdings in return for information about the whereabouts of Jayee Rajguru and his battle plans. As a result, Jayee Rajguru was captured and arrested. But sensing danger of his capture, Jayee Rajguru moved the King of Khurda to a safe place with his trusted lieutenants, so that the symbol of sovereignty of his land could be protected against the Britishers. Jayee Rajguru exhibited his abiding love and eternal loyalty of the highest order to the Motherland by protecting the King from the humiliation, even at the cost of his own life.

The Britishers took Jayee Rajguru to far off Medinapur for trial, as they were apprehensive that his trial might spark a rebellion in the state. After the so called 'trial' by the British court, he was awarded capital punishment for waging war against the state. It bears eloquent testimony to the courage and bravery of Jayee Rajguru that he did not appeal for mercy and forcefully told the court that fighting for the freedom of one's Motherland was never a crime.

On 6 December 1806, Jayee Rajguru attained martyrdom, bringing to an end a life ennobled by patriotism, courage, ingenuity and bravery. He is acknowledged as the first martyr from Orissa in India's freedom struggle and also one of the earliest martyrs in our national movement.

Daring to challenge the British rule in those early years of British colonialism in India was indeed a risky proposition. His revolt represented the beginning and his heroic resistance inspired several well known tribal movements in the later years. The *Kol* rising in 1832 and the *Santhal* movement of 1855-56, which laid the genesis of an epoch-making event - the 1857 War of Independence - drew largely from the Rajguru's revolt. It speaks volumes of Shaheed Jayee Rajguru's popularity, bravery and ardent nationalist spirit that even after two hundred years of his martyrdom, he is reverentially remembered and widely respected by a grateful nation.

Shaheed Jayee Rajguru will always remain an inspiration for the people of India as the one who was an ardent patriot, a valiant freedom fighter and a great national hero.

*[The Portrait of Shaheed Jayee Rajguru, painted by Dr. Dilip Tripathy, will be unveiled by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh on 22 December 2008. The Portrait has been donated by Shri Braja Kishore Tripathy, Member of Parliament, Puri (Orissa).]*