

# ADISHAKTI

Tribal Women Achievers of Odisha







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## Tribal Women Achievers of Odisha

Edited by  
**Prof. (Dr.) A.B Ota**





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# Foreword



I am indeed delighted to write a foreword for this book, which is an important contribution towards highlighting the tribal women's outstanding role in various walks of life. The Coffee Table Book **'ADISHAKTI : Tribal Women Achievers of Odisha'** is an attempt to extend our honour and gratitude to the tribal women of Odisha who have dared to carve a path of their own and whose brave and inspiring actions have made the world to stand up and take note of their inspiring deeds.

Many vital, little-known stories of the lives of these tribal women are conveyed here, showing the world the resilience and wisdom of tribal women, and the respect they command.

I congratulate SCSTRTI, Odisha for their efforts to put together the stories of the inspiring tribal women who have established themselves as trailblazers, champions and pioneers of change! I hope the book will inspire many more of the young generation especially the women to tread the path shown by the notable tribal women covered in this book.

**Ranjana Chopra (IAS)**  
Principal Secretary  
ST & SC Development Department,  
Govt. of Odisha





# Preface



Scheduled Tribes, who constitute a major segment of the society, live mainly in the nature's lap, away from the modern civilization, with their traditional values, customs, beliefs and myths and primarily depend on natural resources for their livelihood. Shyness of the tribals, cultural practices and taboos, cultural resistance to new programmes, remote inaccessible areas are the major bottlenecks in tribal development.

Women in tribal society are doubly disadvantaged as they still face multiple types of disabilities, discrimination and injustice due to their distinct identities, gender and ethnicities. Despite discrimination and limited opportunities many of these women, fighting against all odds, have added glory to the state and nation by demonstrating excellence in various fields.

This Coffee Table Book '**ADISHAKTI :Tribal Women Achievers of Odisha**' is a modest attempt to explore and compile the journey of few extraordinary tribal women of Odisha to recognize the 'Unsung Heroes' who have rose above the disadvantaged circumstances and have converted their limitations to opportunities. These women have set unparalleled example by achieving laurels despite several disabilities thereby creating immeasurable impact in the society and stand as an example for the society, particularly young girls and women to emulate.

I hope the readers enjoy reading this book and salute these valiant tribal women who have etched their glorious names in the annals of history.

**Prof. (Dr.) A.B. Ota**  
Advisor-cum-Director & Special Secretary  
SCSTRTI, Govt. of Odisha







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## **SOCIAL REFORMERS/CHANGE MAKERS**



# Demathi Dei Sabar

Freedom Fighter



Demathi Dei Sabar, a young girl of 16 years and her friends took on gun-toting British officers with lathis in Nuapada, Odisha in 1930. Demathi was working in the fields when the news came that armed British police had attacked their village Saliha which was seen as defiant to the British Raj. Demathi, an Adivasi of the Sabar tribe, raced back with 40 other young women and seeing her father lying on the ground bleeding, attacked the armed British police with a lathi. As she attacked the officer, the 40 other women turned their lathis on the rest of the raiding force forcing the armed police to flee from the area.

Demathi Dei Sabar is known as '**Salihan**' after her village where she was born. Demathi's charge against the British and their police was a feature of what came to be known as the Saliha Uprising and firing. A freedom fighter of Odisha celebrated for her incredible courage having taken on an armed British officer with a lathi passed away in 2002.



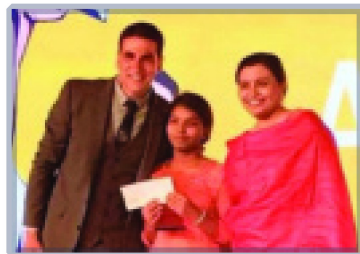
# Geetanjali Marndi

Ambassador of Menstrual Hygiene



Geetanjali Marndi was in class 10<sup>th</sup> in Kapilas Girls High School, Dhenkanal, when she made Odisha proud by representing at the 'Niine Movement's Menstrual Awareness Conclave' at New Delhi in 2018. Geetanjali shared the panel with high profile dignitaries including noted film actor and social activist Ms. Shabana Azmi and also had the opportunity to interact with superstar Akshay Kumar, the brand ambassador of Niine menstrual awareness movement.

An inspiring change-maker at the age of 15, the story of Geetanjali is the clarion call for society at large to start talking about menstruation. Geetanjali has set an example for girls like her by breaking the myths and misconceptions associated with menstruation and continuing her education inspite of social taboos. She was nominated for the conclave by the ST & SC Development Department, Government of Odisha. She has been spreading awareness among her peers in school and in her community about menstrual hygiene, makes them understand about the myths associated with it thereby reducing drop out or absenteeism among girls from schools due to menstruation.





# Jamunamani Singh

Social Worker



Jamunamani Singh, a tribal woman of Balasore district, became a household name when Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi appreciated her work and recognised her fight against malaria in the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of his radio programme "Mann Ki Baat".

A native of Tenda village, Balasore, Jamunamani works as ASHA worker since 2010. With the resolve not to allow any malaria death, she took extraordinary efforts to prepare people to fight malaria and spread awareness about its precautionary measures. A Class IX passout, Jamuna had single-handedly launched the fight against the superstition to save people from succumbing to malaria. She visits every house in the village, reaches the house as soon as she gets information about someone falling ill and stresses every house to use insecticide mosquito net.

Besides creating awareness against Malaria, she and her husband also dissuade people against depending upon quacks, black magic and witchcraft. She not only encourages people to go to hospitals but also accompanies them whenever required. The State Government has also felicitated Jamunamani for her relentless effort and selfless service to the people.



## Jhulima Mallick

Gender Equality Champion



Bringing laurels to the State, Jhulima Mallick, a tribal girl of Bandudi village under Khajuripada block of Kandhamal district won the Unicef-supported V-Award 2019 for her work to end child marriage and promote education among girls in her area. Twenty two-year-old Jhulima received the award from Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Kiren Rijiju at UN-House, New Delhi on the occasion of international Volunteers Day. She is one among the 10 awardees of the country and only from the State. V-Award recognises extraordinary young people who are changing their own life and that of the communities around them.

Belonging to the Kanda tribe, Jhulima dropped out of school in Class X because of poverty and worked as a labourer to support her family's income. Later, she worked as volunteer and led adolescent girls of her village to fight against child marriage. Jhulima has formed a cultural troupe with help of local adolescent girls to spread message on social issues related to child rights and has helped stop around many child marriages in the area.





# Padmabati Naik

Health Worker



Padmabati Naik is an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), at a Primary Health Centre (PHC) located in Kaptipada block, a predominantly tribal area in Mayurbhanj district. In August 2019, Naik received the 'Plan India Impact Award' for her commitment and dedication to bring down maternal and infant mortality in her area.

Traversing difficult hilly and forest terrain for the last 25 years, Naik has ensured that all the 1,000 households under her charge receive timely health care. It's her dedication and determination that has brought down Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates in her areas. Over the last decade, there has been no maternal and infant death in the three villages and 33 hamlets under her care. All deliveries in her area have been in health facilities and Naik has ensured that none of the children in the zero to three age group, has missed vaccinations. She has spearheaded promotion of breast feeding in her area and plays a key role in dissuading parents and adolescents from child marriage.

# Shanti Murmu

Change Agent for Gender Equality



Shanti Murmu, a Santhal tribal girl from Indkholi village, Bahalda block of Mayurbhanj district, lost her mother while she was only five months old and her suffering further worsened when her father married again. Despite all odds she managed to complete her 10th class from Dumadihi Residential High School, Rairangpur and moved on to pursue higher studies from KISS, Bhubaneswar.

A victim of social taboos and evils prevailing in her community, Shanti was always determined to excel in life and work for her community. At the young age of 18, she initiated 'Parivartan' to address the problems of girl child education, early marriage, myths around menstruation, alcoholism and domestic violence against women. Through 'Parivartan', she has arranged core teams of Anganwadi workers who are spreading awareness about these issues in the villages.

In 2016, she was selected as a member of the Ashoka Youth Venture for her initiative "Parivartan" first of such student to be selected from Odisha. She was also selected as a panelist to discuss gender inequality and express her opinion at **'The Shared Value Summit-2016.'**





# Padma Shri Tulasi Munda

Social Worker, Reformer



Born in a Munda tribal family in Kainshi village of Keonjhar district, Tulasi Munda rose to prominence as a social reformer due to her continued efforts and perseverance to promote education among tribal children.

A victim of illiteracy, she dedicated her life to eradicate this scourge and devoted herself to teaching and educating children, especially girls as she believed that illiteracy was the worst form of enslavement; the root cause of all forms of social evils.

In 1964, she started an informal school with a handful of children in an open verandah which slowly grew into a movement. Due to her indomitable will and indefatigable energy, '*Tulasi Apa*', as she is popularly known, succeeded in educating more than 20,000 boys and girls and also helped the government to establish 17 schools for primary and secondary education. For her outstanding contribution to spreading literacy among the impoverished tribal people of Odisha, Tulasi Munda was awarded the **Padma Shri** in 2001.





**ECO-REVOLUTIONISTS  
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION  
& CONSERVATION**



# Anna Kujur

Forest Conservationist & Tribal Rights Advocacy



Anna Kujur, 47, is a popular figure among the tribals of Sundergarh district in Odisha. This simple tribal woman from Sunajor village has spent nearly a decade spreading awareness among the forest-dwelling communities in the region about their legitimate claims on forest resources. She not only encourages them to stand up for their rights and entitlements but also gives them reasons to hope for a better tomorrow.

As a child, she witnessed her landless parents work day-and-night to make ends meet. With marriage, her problems only seemed to multiply. Nursing a burning desire to change her own fate and that of others like her, she set up the '*Athkosia Adivasi Sangathan*' in 2000. When the Forest Rights Act 2006 came in place, she got a pathway to realize her goal. Working with the forest dwellers of around 148 villages, she mobilised them to apply claims for their land rights and so far, helped about 2,000 tribal people obtain their rightful 'patta'. The selfless and dedicated work of '*Anna di*' is acknowledged by thousands of tribal forest-dwellers in Sundergarh.





# Padma Shri Kamala Pujari

## Conservationist



Hailing from a poor tribal family in Patraput village of tribal-dominated Koraput district of Odisha Kamala Pujari has always been fascinated with traditional paddy seeds. Pujari has been a pioneer of preserving hundreds of indigenous varieties of paddy, several endangered and rare types of seeds and for promoting organic farming.

In 2002, she was awarded with Equator Initiative Award at Johannesburg, South Africa for her innovative efforts to preserve grains and use it for community development. In 2004, she was felicitated as the 'Best Woman Farmer' by Government of Odisha for her outstanding contribution in agriculture sector. She holds the unique distinction of being the first tribal woman to become a member of Odisha State Planning Board in 2018.

Popularly called "preserver of paddy seeds", Kamala was conferred the Padma Shri on 2019 for her remarkable contribution in conserving more than 100 varieties of traditional paddy seeds through use of bio fertilizers.



# Raimati Ghiuria

Conservationist



Farmers in the Koraput district, Odisha now look up to the young tribal woman for guidance and Raimati Ghiuria does not let them down. Resident of Nuaguda village, Raimati, has set them on a new path for development by conserving 40 traditional landraces of rice and 12 of millets. She has trained nearly 340 women farmers in conserving local genetic resources and others in SRI technique and line transplanting method of rice cultivation.

It all started when Raimati became a member of a Self Help Group (SHG) in her village and participated in training programs at M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Koraput. The training helped her undertake various micro-enterprises making her SHG become a model one in the district and receiving the 'Most Progressive SHG award' in 2013. She guided 27 SHG groups to take up value addition of rice and millet as a micro enterprise which helped each family earn additional income of Rs 2,000/- to 3,000/-

She won the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy Fellowship Award in 2014 for being "a leading grassroots academician."





## LITERATURE, ART & CULTURE

# Alma Grace Barla

Writer and Researcher in Tribal Issues



Alma Grace Barla was one of the 26 Fellows selected to participate in the 2013 Indigenous Fellowship Programme of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Geneva. Barla, author of *'Indigenous Heroines: A Saga of Tribal Women of India'* is an independent writer, social worker and researcher on tribal issues.

Born in Simdega Paikbahal village, Sundargarh district, Barla experienced the struggles faced by rural tribal youth and women in particular, in accessing education, employment and other facilities and therefore decided to advocate for their rights and empowerment under various capacities.

In 2004, she started her career as a journalist with the *'Indian Currents'* magazine in Delhi. Working as a journalist she came across various cases of human-trafficking and violence faced by migrant tribal girls and women working in Delhi and neighbouring states as domestic worker which moved her to work for their welfare. Since 2005, she has been engaged with the tribal people's struggle for their rights, identity and survival. Barla also takes interest in documenting the oral traditions of various tribes across regions and history in comparison.





# Basanti Majhi

Folklorist



Basanti Majhi is a gifted storyteller who doesn't have any formal education. Born into a poor Kondh family in Jharipani village of Kandhamal district, Odisha, Basanti was inspired by her grandmother who ignited her imagination by narrating to her enthralling tales.

Author of '*Kutia Kondh Lok Kahani*', a rare collection of stories penned in Kui, Basanti has in her way introduced the new generation of Kondh children to their native traditions and folklore, which until now had passed down over the generations only through oral tradition.

A 'child of the greens', Majhi with her incredible imagination weaves the characters of her stories around tribal culture, her stories are often seen overcoming the difficulties of contemporary times, presenting issues such as drought, hunger, poverty, and child marriage in all their stark detail.

'Kutia Kondh Lok Kahani' has made history as for the first time a Kondh has provided a glimpse into the mind of a tribal girl, her lifestyle, her aspirations and imagination and was also a completely unexplored genre in Odia literature.

## Gurubari Mirdha

### Sambalpuri Folk Dancer



Gurubari Mirdha is still a graceful and charismatic icon in the world of tribal music in Odisha, with her lyrics '*Dal Khai Re*' that has made her immortal. Hailing from M. Ganapallai, a nondescript village in Bargarh district, Mirdha had tremendous contribution to popularize Sambalpuri and Dalkhai dance in the country and singularly was enough to keep the audience spell bound for hours together through the beats of her feet.

As she passed away in 2016, a void has been left, with people of the State, particularly art connoisseurs, still remembering her sterling performance as a noted Sambalpuri and Dalkhai dancer. Mirdha hogged the headlines when she performed at the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi in 1968. Enthralled by her performance the then Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi went up to her and joined her on the famous Dalkhai song.

Gurubari was one of the first tribal teenagers who made a career in song and dance in an era defined by orthodox ideas and also featured in the 1970 calendar of the tourism department.





# Malati Murmu

Editor & Publisher of 'Fagun' - Santhali Newspaper



Malati Murmu, a Santhal tribal woman from Odisha's, Mayurbhanj district, is the proud editor-publisher of '**Fagun**', the only Santhali language newspaper published in India. Murmu, who has done her matriculation in Santhali, got the idea of putting together a publication in her native language when four tribal languages - Santhali, Bodo, Maithili and Dogri were recognised and included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 2003.

With the strong belief that preserving a language is as important as preserving the identity of an entire community, Murmu started this initiative to make sure that Santhalis stay connected to their unique heritage. Publishing the newspaper was not easy for Malati as she did not have the kind of finances needed to get such an ambitious project rolling and took the help of some prominent members of the community to invest. While Fagun's inaugural edition had a print run of 500 copies, today it has a circulation up to 5,000.copies with readers across the country.

Murmu was awarded with 'True Legends Awards 2016', Odisha for her unique initiative and consistent effort to keep the Santhalis woven together through the country's first newspaper for the tribe.











## **WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE**



## Chandrani Murmu

Youngest Parliamentarian



For those with a steadfast will and unwavering determination, age is just a number that does not get in the way of turning their aspirations into reality. At 25, Chandrani Murmu has created history by becoming the youngest Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha from Odisha.

Born on 16th June, 1993, she was elected to the Lok Sabha, from Keonjhar, Odisha in the 2019 as a member of the Biju Janata Dal. Contesting from Odisha's Keonjhar constituency, Chandrani defeated her opponent by a margin of 66,203 votes.

Her entry into politics though was not a planned one. A BTech in Mechanical Engineering, Chandrani was looking for a government or an engineering job in a private company, until she was encouraged by her uncle, Harmohan Soren, to contest for the Lok Sabha elections. Chandrani, a greenhorn in politics, is working hard to come up to the expectations pinned on her by the youth and women besides the tribals in her region.





## Dinja Jakesika

Outstanding Panchayat Leader



Dinja Jakesika, a twice elected Sarpanch of Kurli Panchayat under Bissamkatak block in Rayagada district won the 'Outstanding Woman Panchayat leader' in 2016. She is first woman from Dongaria Kondh, a PVTG tribe to get a passport and participated in the International Indigenous Film Festival at Bali in January 2018, where she spoke against the bauxite mining in Niyamgiri Hills.

Though Dinja never had opportunity to go to school, she realises the power of knowledge and relentlessly works to arrest dropout rate in schools. As a Sarpanch, Dinja actively takes part in every programme meant for the betterment of the society and ensures that people of her area get the benefits of the government programmes.

Apart from her dedicated service to the cause of education and ensuring that government programmes reached the poor, Dinja also campaigns against social evils, migration of labour and superstitions like sorcery. Due to her strong leadership skills, Dinja is considered as the voice of her community, a bridge between her community and the government agencies



# Draupadi Murmu

First Tribal Woman as Governor



Draupadi Murmu from Mayurbhanj district of Odisha created history when she became the first woman Governor of Jharkhand in May 2015. Born on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1958, Draupadi also holds the distinction of being the first woman and tribal leader from Odisha to be appointed as a Governor in an Indian state.

Before she joined politics she worked as an Honorary Assistant Professor in Shri Aurobindo Integral Education and Research, Rairangpur, and then as a Junior Assistant in the Irrigation Department of Odisha.

She began her illustrious political career in 1997 when she was elected as Councillor in Rairangpur district, Odisha and since then, there has been no looking back for this pioneering woman. The same year she went on to become the Vice-Chairperson of Rairangpur. In 2000, she was elected from the same constituency of Rairangpur to the state assembly. Between 2000- 2004, she held ministerial portfolios in the Department of Transport and Commerce and in Fisheries and Animal Resources Department. She was awarded the "Nilakantha Award" for the best MLA in 2007 by the Odisha Legislative Assembly.





# Frida Topno

Member of Parliament & First Tribal Woman Graduate



Frida Topno, born on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1925, at Rungaon village in Bargaon block of Sundargarh district was a veteran Congress leader and Member of Parliament from Odisha. Frida graduated from Sailabala College, Cuttack to become the first tribal woman graduate from Odisha. She retired as Deputy Secretary in Tribal Welfare Department in the early 1980s.

In 1985, she was elected from RN Pali Assembly constituency in Sundargarh as a Congress candidate. She was twice elected to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha from Sundargarh constituency in 1991 and 1996 as Indian National Congress candidate. Frida was also the national vice-president of Indian Women's Hockey Federation and President of Odisha Women's Hockey Association.

Frida Topno, represented Odisha in the Rajya Sabha from April 1998 to April 2004 and was an inspiration for many Indian politicians and social workers, particularly tribal women who aspired to make a mark for themselves in the society. With her passing away on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 at the age of 92 years, the country lost a distinguished parliamentarian and a dedicated social worker.

## Hema Gamang

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha



Hema Gamang, born on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1961 in Khilapadar in Koraput district is a political leader and social worker. She was elected as the Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha from the Koraput constituency as an Indian National Congress candidate in 1999. From 1999-2000, she was a member on the Committee on Urban and Rural Development. Then, from 2000-2004, she served as a member on Consultative Committee, Ministry of Steel and was also a Member of Telephone Advisory Committee, Odisha.

Hema, an intermediate graduate from Rama Devi Women's College, Bhubaneswar is the wife of former Chief Minister of Odisha, Giridhar Gamang. Hema was also a Congress MLA from Gunupur assembly constituency in 2004.





# Poma Tudu

Indian Administrative Services (IAS)



The 2012 batch IAS officer from Odisha, Poma Tudu is an inspiration for many. A graduate of Delhi's Lady Hardinge Medical College, Odisha-cadre IAS officer has been helping villagers by visiting Naxal affected hostile zones to hear and counsel their grievances. Born on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1979, she is the first tribal woman from Odisha to be posted as Collector in Nuapada in 2017.

As Collector of Nuapada, Poma hogged the limelight when she trekked more than 4 kms through the hilly terrain to reach a remote village in the forest area to hear the grievances of the people. This became a regular feature during her tenure as Collector, when she trekked through the rugged terrain for more than two hours to reach to the people directly and address their issues. Working on providing fast connectivity and medical services to the remote villages, Poma strongly believes in the welfare of humanity which can directly be seen through her actions

As a child, Poma didn't have to look far for a role model as her mother is the first woman in her tribal family to go to school, college and on to get a bank job. Determined to bring about social change, Poma goes beyond her regular service to devote personal time towards social causes and tribal issues.



# Sakuntala Laguri

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha



Sakuntala Laguri is an Indian politician from Odisha who was elected to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha in 2014 from Keonjhar constituency as a member of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). During her tenure as MP, Lok Sabha from 2014-2019, she was the Member of Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and Member of Consultative Committee, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2014. In 2016, she was the Member of Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Born on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1980 in Madhuban of Jajpur district, Odisha, Shakuntala was the first time parliamentarian when she won the Lok Sabha seat. As a politician and social worker, Laguri's priorities are empowering the local Adivasis and implementing government schemes in her area for the empowerment and upliftment of her community.





## Saraswati Hembram

First tribal woman appointed as Minister



Saraswati Hembram was the first tribal MLA and also the first tribal woman in Odisha to be appointed in the rank of a Minister in 1990. In 1999 she had the distinction of being appointed as the Cabinet Minister.

Born on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1949 in Mayurbhanj district, Saraswati was attracted to politics from childhood being convinced about the ideals of Indian National Congress Party. She was elected as Sarpanch of Palasmundle Gram Panchayat of Morada Block Mayurbhanj from 1975-1980. Committed to bring about socio-economic transformations of the tribal community and to eradicate social evils prevailing therein, Saraswati had established educational institutions at different places for educational advancement in tribal society. Member of Mayurbhanj Adibasi Students' Associations from 1964 to 1967, she was the main architect behind starting a condensed course at Baripada and an Oriya Upper. Primary School at Kiriburu hill-top in Keonjhar district for education of poor and needy girls. President-cum-founder Member of Baba Balia College at Baiganbaria in Kuliana Block she also started one nursery school named "Ananta Sudha Prangya Vihar" at Baripada.

# Sarojini Hembram

Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha



With the election of Sarojini Hembram to the Rajya Sabha, she became the first woman MLA from Odisha to be elected to the Upper House of the Parliament in 2014. Hembram was first elected on a BJD ticket from Bangiriposi Assembly seat in 2009 and became the minister for textile, handlooms and handicrafts in the Odisha Government.

Born on 1st October 1959 at Rairangpur block of Mayurbhanj district, Sarojini has a Post Graduate in Music and was educated at K.N.G. High School, Baripada and Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar. She was the Vocal folk singer/artist in All India Radio and Doordarshan since 1983. She has participated in many cultural programmes relating to tribal culture and also performed as an artist, playback singer, actress, and production controller.

Proficient in English, Hindi, Odia, Bengali and Santhali languages, Sarojini Hembram was a Lecturer in Music in Jayadev College of Education and Technology, Naharkanta, Bhubaneswar from 1990 to 1999.





## Sushila Tiriya

Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha



Sushila Tiriya, is a social worker and a versatile politician from the Indian National Congress party, who was a Member of Parliament representing Odisha in the Rajya Sabha in year 1986 and again in 2006. During her term, she served as a Member in the Consultative Committees of Ministry of Science and Technology, Atomic Energy and Ocean Development in 1986-87, Ministry of Civil Aviation in 1987-88, and Ministry of Communications in 1988-89.

Born on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1956 to a family of freedom fighters in Mayurbhanj district, Sushila has special interests in the upliftment of rural poor tribals as well as the unemployed youth. She joined the Youth Congress (I) and became its President and Vice-president in 1983 and 1984 respectively, from Mayurbhanj. From 1987 to 1993, she served as the General Secretary of the Indian Youth Congress and was member of the committees on Government Assurances (1988-89) and Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1989-92).



She was elected to the 10<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha from Mayurbhanj in 1994 and again got re-elected to 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha in 1996.









**ENTREPRENEURS**



# Draupadi Tiria

Sericulture Farmer



Draupadi Tiria, a tribal woman from Keonjhar district, has set an example by her successful endeavour in the silk farming sector. Draupadi, a resident of Tangiriapal under Harichandanpur block started silk farming around 20 years back, when she was struggling through a bad financial condition. In order to earn a little more, she joined the Tangiriapal Tasar Rearer Cooperative Society (TRCS) and started practising Tasar culture. With the support from TRCS and state government she established private grainage, producing high quality Tasar DFSL for her own utilization in commercial reelings as well as selling it to co- farmers.

Today, Tiria is a successful Tasar farmer who did not just improve her own financial condition with her hard work but also made others in her community adapt to market demands and new techniques of farming to ensure higher profits.

Draupadi was felicitated with National Award of Excellence 2014-15 as a women achiever in Sericulture farmer category. She has also been felicitated by the Odisha and Jharkhand government for showing a wide path for women to earn a livelihood.



# Jayanti Ekka

Entrepreneur



Life was never an easy path to tread for 35 years old Jayanti Ekka, who struggled hard to make a dint for herself in the society. Born to a family of peasants with a minor deformity in her lower limbs, Jayanti was not good at academics. But her asset was an entrepreneurial mindset and urge to deliver back to the society, especially young women and housewives, of her village Balisankara in Sundergarh district.

Backed by her grit and focus Jayanti started a small Self Help Group (SHG), named 'Kalyani' with a nominal loan of Rs 15,000 in 2003. Within a short span she was able to bag contracts for serving midday meals (MDM) and within 5 years was able to employ two dozen women in her SHG. 'Kalyani' has evolved as a self-governed enterprise supporting around 50 families in the district.

Jayanti, the president of the SHG federation of Sundergarh district which runs 15,000 SHGs, was congratulated by Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha when she narrated her success story at the Make in Odisha Conclave 2018.





# Lipsa Hembram

Fashion Designer & Entrepreneur



Lipsa Hembram is a change maker, charting a path for her own, creating a space for herself and showing the way to others. Hailing from the Santhali community, Lipsa took the Odisha tribal art to national level by making a splash at the Lakme Fashion Week 2017.

Coming from a non-fashion family background, Lipsa faced a lot of hurdles when she expressed her decision to study fashion design but she moved on to pursue her passion and graduated from NIFT, Hyderabad in 2008, specializing in fashion and apparel design. Founder of fashion brand, 'Galang Gabaan', Lipsa is being credited for taking Odisha's tribal weaves to the national and international fashion stage.

Galang Gabaan which means 'to create something out of love' in Santhali language has wide range of ready to wear collections made of organic dyed textiles from Kotpad and traditional Santhali Sarees which has caught the attention of leading fashionistas. Lipsa as a successful fashion designer showcases with much pride the novelty of her crafts and the rarity of her tribal roots as well as represents Odisha's unique cultural identity to the external world.





## SPORTS





# Deep Grace Ekka

Hockey Player



Born on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1994 in Lulkidhi village of Sundergarh district, Deep Grace Ekka plays as defender for the Indian Women Hockey Team. Completing her 200 International matches in 2019 playing against Great Britain, she is an inspiration for aspiring hockey players of the State and beyond.

She joined the SAI-SAG centre in 2007 and started playing at state level at the age of 13. She made her international debut in the Four-Nation Tournament 2011 in Argentina in which India won bronze medal. Ekka played for the Bronze Medal-winning Indian team in the U18 Girls Asia Cup in Bangkok, Thailand and was also part of the Junior squad's historic Bronze Medal feat at the 2013 Women's Junior Hockey World Cup in Germany.

Grace was selected in the senior team which won the bronze medal at the 8th Women's Asia Cup 2013. As a drag-flicker and defender, Ekka was a key player in 2013 Asian Champions Trophy, 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, Asian Champions Trophy 2016, Rio Olympics-2016, 9th Women's Asia Cup in Japan 2017 and Asian Champions Trophy 2018.



## Hupi Majhi

Rugby Player



Growing up in the small village of Dhatika in Keonjhar district, Hupi Majhi, a Santhali girl, was raised in strict customs and social taboos where girls were not allowed to play and kept indoors as much as possible.

However, her talent and spirit was well nurtured at KISS, where she started playing Rugby. Hupi was part of the state team which emerged champion in U16 National Rugby Championship in 2011 and thereon there has been no looking back for Hupi. She was a part of the India team in the Pre Olympic Qualifier Rugby Women's 7s in 2015.

Hupi represented India in Asia Rugby Women's Sevens Tournament in 2016 and was one of the top three try scorers of the tournament. She was part of India team winning the silver medal in the Asia Rugby 7s Championship in 2019 and also played in the team which scripted history by getting Bronze Medal in Asian Rugby 15s Championship 2019.

With her speed, agility and understanding of the game, Hupi is an asset to the Indian Women Rugby team.





# Jauna Murmu

Sprint Runner and Hurdler



Jauna Murmu, born on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1990 in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha is a sprint runner and hurdler who specializes in 400m and 400 m hurdles. As on date she has participated in multiple international and national competitions. Jauna, a product of Sports hostel, Bhubaneswar, won the gold medal in U-20 girls 400 m run, bronze in 200 m sprint event of the 25<sup>th</sup> National Junior Athletics Championship 2009, silver in 400 m Inter-State Senior Athletics Championship 2010, gold in 4x100 m relay Inter-State Senior Athletics Championship 2014 and 2015, gold in 400 m hurdles in 20<sup>th</sup> Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championship 2016, bagged two gold in 57<sup>th</sup> National Open Athletics Championship 2017, gold in 400 hurdles in 57<sup>th</sup> National Open Athletics Championship 2019 to name a few.

In international events, she won gold in 400 m hurdles event and one bronze in 400m sprint in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian All Star Athletics Meet 2010; bagged two gold medals in the 400 m hurdles and the 4 x 400m relay in the South Asian Games, 2016.



# Jhilli Dalabehera

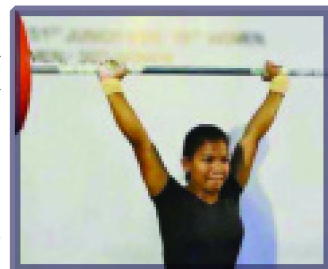
Weightlifter



Born on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1999, Jhilli Dalabehera, belongs to Khaira tribal community from Nayagarh district, Odisha. She epitomizes the woman prowess and has proved herself as a Champion Weightlifter in national and international circuit. Jhilli rose to fame when she broke three state records on her way to the Gold medal in the 31<sup>st</sup> Women's State Weightlifting Championships held in Berhampur in 2015.

Dalabehera's first international medal came in 2016 when she won the silver medal in 48 kg junior weight category at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships. She made Odisha proud by winning the Gold Medal in the Commonwealth (Junior) Weightlifting Championship' 2017. She had won two Bronze Medals at Youth Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship' 2016 held at Penang (Malaysia) and at the 2018 IWF Junior World Weightlifting Championships held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Jhilli added another feather to her cap when she clinched the Gold in the under 45 kg category at the 13th South Asian Games, 2019 in Nepal. She has been awarded the 27<sup>th</sup> Ekalabya Award 2019 for her consistent performance in various national and international events.





# Jyoti Sunita Kullu

Hockey Player



Born on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1978 in Sundargarh, Odisha, Jyoti Sunita Kullu, played for the Indian Women's Hockey Team.

Product of Panposh Sports Hostel, Sundargarh, Kullu completed her 12<sup>th</sup> class and moved ahead for her training at Kapurthala Hockey Academy, Punjab. She made her first international debut for India in 1996 in Delhi at the Indira Gandhi Gold Cup. In 2002 she became the top scorer of the Champions Challenge tournament in Johannesburg, South Africa, with five goals in six matches. In the same year Kullu won the Gold medal with India at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England.

The former India captain led the country to an Asian Games bronze at Doha in 2006 and was part of the silver medal winning team at Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006. The veteran centre-forward player, Jyoti Sunita Kullu was rewarded with Arjuna Award in 2007 for her services to hockey. Kullu currently working with Rail coach factory in Kapurthala has also received the Biju Patnaik Outstanding Sportspersons Award in 2006.



## Lilima Minz

Hockey Player



Lilima, one of the most promising Hockey players that Odisha has ever produced was born on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1994 in Bihabandh - Tanatoli village near Lanjiberna of Sundargarh district.

Trained at Sports Hostel Panposh, Rourkela, Lilima was part of the Indian Women's Hockey Team that made history by winning the bronze medal for the first time in Women's Junior Hockey World Cup in July 2013. Lilima has over the years proved her worth in the Indian team with significant performances as mid field strategic player and has been part of India's major victories.

Minz who made her international debut in 2011, represented the nation at the 2014 Commonwealth Games at Glasgow, 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, Korea where India won the bronze, represented India as part of the team in 2016 Rio summer Olympics and was also part of Asian cup winning squad in 2017.

She touched the milestone of representing India in 150 international matches in 2019 during India's clash against Japan in the final of the Olympic test event in Tokyo.



# Mandakini Majhi

Kho Kho Player



Mandakini Majhi became first Kho Kho player from Odisha, for being selected in Indian Women's Kho Kho team to participate in the 12<sup>th</sup> South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, 2016 and win the Gold medal.

Before this historic achievement, Mandakini had gained many successes to her credit including 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 19<sup>th</sup> East Zone National Kho-Kho Championship 2014; represented Odisha in 46<sup>th</sup> Senior National Kho-Kho Championship 2012-13 and was placed in 3<sup>rd</sup> position in Junior National Kho-Kho Championship 2014. Mandakini had also participated in 33<sup>rd</sup> Junior National Kho-Kho Championship 2013, placed in 3<sup>rd</sup> position in National Cadet Corps National Games, 2013 and also had represented Odishain National Games 2015.

Coming from a poor Kondh family from Ludhipada village of Bolangir district, Mandakini is currently pursuing her studies in Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Bhubaneswar. Being a girl from a tribal community who was never given a chance to go out of her house, Mandakini has created history which is not an individual glory but an achievement for the entire community.



## Manju Munda

Wushu Player



Manju Munda of Sialijoda village, under Joda block of Keonjhar district, has brought glory for Odisha as well as India by bagging Gold in the Moscow Wushu Stars-2019 Championships held in Moscow, Russia. She defeated her Russian counterpart in the finals to snatch the yellow metal in the 42-kg category. In the semi and quarter final, she conquered her Egypt and Kazakhstan counterparts, respectively.

Manju was the only player from Odisha in the 28-member Indian squad which was accompanied by Pankaj Kumar Mahanta and three others as coach. Currently pursuing her intermediate at Joda Women's College, Manju has 20 medals in her kitty so far including 12 gold medals. In 2017, she had won a Bronze in national level Wushu Championship held in Uttarakhand.

The sporting talent of the tribal girl was first spotted by JSPL Foundation which has been promoting rural and ethnic sports in Barbil of Keonjhar district. The Foundation extended all round support to her facilitating her participation in State and National level Championships since 2011.



# Meera Rani Hembram

Rugby Player



Meera Rani Hembram's journey from a remote Ghasipura village of Gopalpur in Odisha to representing the India's Women Rugby team is awe inspiring. Having lost her mother at an early age, her father living in abject poverty had to send Meera to an orphanage. In the orphanage, she was chosen to be adopted by a couple in Singapore, but the adoption got cancelled as destiny had something else stored for Meera. She finally landed in KISS, a free residential boarding school where she got to know about Rugby as a sport.

Born on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1996, Meera started playing rugby at the national level in 2010 and made her international debut in the Asia Women's 7s Championship in 2012. She played for India team winning the silver medal in the Asia Rugby 7s Championship in 2019 and was part of the team scripting history by getting Bronze Medal in Asian Rugby 15s Championship 2019 defeating Singapore. Meera spoke at the TEDx in Bangalore inspiring the youth that challenges in life should not stop one from achieving the goals.



## Namita Toppo

Hockey Player



Born on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1995, in Rajgangpur block of Sundargarh district, Namita Toppo is a midfielder in the Indian Hockey Women's Squad. Trained in Sports Hostel, Panposh, Rourkela, Namita first represented her state team in 2007. Her performance in the domestic circuit saw her getting selected to the Girls U-18 Hockey Asia Cup in Bangkok, Thailand in 2011 where India won the bronze medal. Toppo represented the senior team in 2012 when she participated in the FIH champions challenge in Dublin.

The youngster has since participated in major international tournaments like FIH World League Round 2 in 2013 where India won the gold, 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Champions Trophy in 2013 where India won the silver medal, 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Cup in 2017 where India won the silver medal. Namita was also part of Rio Olympic squad in 2016 which represented India in the summer Olympics after 36 years. Namita was felicitated with Asuntra Lakra Award in 2014 by Hockey India. Toppo played her 150<sup>th</sup> international match against England in 2018 Women's Hockey World Cup in London.





# Pramila Krisani

Weightlifter

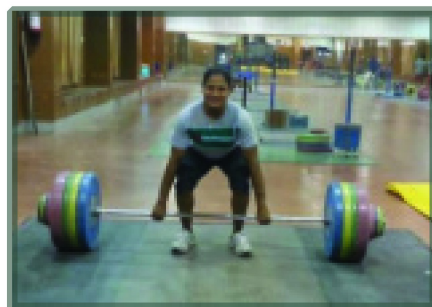


Born on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1996 in a remote village of Lamtaput, the girl belonging to Paraja tribal community in Koraput has elevated herself to be an icon of women weightlifting sportspersons.

Pramila made her international debut in Youth World Championship at Penang, Malaysia in 2008. She won 3 silver medals in women 53kg category in 13th Asian Youth Weightlifting Championship at Pattaya, Thailand in 2011; bagged gold medal in the 53kg girl's category in Youth Commonwealth Championship at Cape Town, South Africa in 2011, bagged one silver medal in the Youth Commonwealth Championship at Penang, Malaysia in 2010.

Her international career came to limelight when she was adjudged best women lifter by winning one gold and one silver in 53kg junior and senior categories of the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship held in Pune in 2015.

She has many more feathers to her cap like winning gold in the 53kg category of the 30<sup>th</sup> Women Senior National Weightlifting Championship 2015, Silver in Commonwealth Junior Weightlifting Championship at Penang in Malaysia in November, 2013 and the like.



## Pramila Prava Minz

Rower



Pramila Prava Minz is an Indian rower from Odisha, who wrote history for India by becoming the first woman of the country along with Pratima Puhan to win a medal (bronze) in 2010 Asian Games. Born on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1992, in Sundargarh district, Pramila is the product of SAI Water Sports, Cuttack.

Pramila has helped Odisha win gold medal in women's coxless four event in 31<sup>st</sup> Junior National Rowing Championship 2010, won two gold medals in coxless pair events in 34<sup>th</sup> National Games, 2011, two silver medals in 200m and 500m double scull events of 33<sup>rd</sup> Senior National Rowing Championship, 2014, gold in 500 m coxless four event of 34<sup>th</sup> Senior National Rowing Championship, 2016, one silver and one bronze medal in 35<sup>th</sup> Senior National Rowing Championship, 2017, gold medal in LWT Women's individual event in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indoor National Rowing Championship, 2017.

Pramila has been directly appointed as Sub Inspector of Police by the State Government in 2015 and is also the recipient of first runner up prize of 19<sup>th</sup> Ekalabya Purashkar in 2012.





# Purnima Hembram

Athlete



Purnima Hembram belonging to Santhal community in Odisha is one of the most dependable medal winning track and field athletes of the country. Born on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1993, in Mayurbhanj district, Purnima won two gold medals in Under -18 girls' heptathlon and javelin events of the State Athletics Championship in 2008.

Her national level performances includes winning of silver medal in 51<sup>st</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Open National Athletics Championship 2011 and 2013, Gold in heptathlon in 19<sup>th</sup> Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championship 2015, Gold medal in heptathlon and 400m relay of the 55th Inter-State Senior Athletics Championship, Gold in 400m hurdles on her maiden attempt in 56<sup>th</sup> Inter-State Senior Athletics Championship 2016, Gold in 100 m event in the 56<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> National Open Athletic Championship, 2016, and 2017 to mention a few. Hembram was declared Biju Patnaik Sportsman of the Year in 2015

In international arena, Hembram won bronze medals in the heptathlon at the 2015 and 2017 Asian Championships, gold medal at the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in 2017.



# Sahebani Oram

Athlete and Shooter



Born on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1976 in Oram family at Khamar, Sundargarh district, Sahebani has brought laurels to the State by dint of her performances in Athletics and Shooting. She helped India win the 400m Womens' relay gold in the Junior Asian Athletics Championship at Delhi in 1996. Her International career in the senior category started with her qualification for the 400m hurdles final in the 14<sup>th</sup> Asian Athletic Championship at Colombo in 2002.

Her winning spree includes Gold in 1600 m event in National Games 1997, gold in 400 hurdles in 7<sup>th</sup> Federation Cup National Senior Athletics Championship 2001; gold in 100m hurdles at the Senior Inter-State Federation Cup Athletics Championship, 2001-2002, Silver medal in the 10<sup>th</sup> Federation Cup National Senior Athletic Championship 2004.

Multi talented Sahebani Oram has also received laurels in shooting, winning gold medal in Senior Women 0.177 Air Pistol Event of the 5<sup>th</sup> Odisha state shooting championship at Bhubaneswar. At national level, she won gold medal in Senior Women's 10m Air Pistol Category in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gun for Glory Shooting Championship at Pune in 2005.



# Sumitra Nayak

Rugby Player



For Sumitra Nayak, skipper of Under-18 India women's rugby team, the only passion and identity in her life is rugby. The 'Rugby queen' also led the India Team for Asia Rugby U-20 Women's Seven Series held in Laos in August 2019.

She was born in a poor tribal family in Odisha's Jajpur district and lived under abject poverty, barely surviving on two-square meals a day till her mother got her admitted to KISS, where she started her rugby practice in 2009. In 2012, she played her first State match and in 2014 she participated in the U-13 Women's Rugby World Cup. She helped her team clinch bronze medal in the Asian Girls Rugby 7s (U-18) held in Dubai in 2017. Sumitra landed Indian Rugby team a historic win against Team Singapore and created India's first ever international win to finish third in the Asian Rugby 15s Championship 2019 in Manila.

Sumitra, an inspiration for young girls, was invited to deliver a Tedx Talk in Pune where she was introduced as a 'dreamer, achiever and a trend setter'.



## Sunita Lakra

Hockey Player



Considered as one of India's most reliable woman hockey players in the backline, Sunita Lakra achieved the milestone of completing 150 International matches in 2019 during team's second match against Republic of Korea. Born on 11 June, 1991 at Rajgangpur in Sundargarh district, she joined Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Rourkela at the age of six. She made her international debut in 2009 and has emerged as one of the most important cogs in the Indian defence, guiding the team to victories in the Asian Champions Trophy in 2016, 9<sup>th</sup> Women's Asia Cup 2017 in Japan, Silver Medal at the 18th Asian Games Jakarta & Palembang.

As Vice Captain during South Korea tour in 2018, Lakra led the team to win the match series. She captained the team to win the Silver medal in the Asian Champions Trophy 2018 and was an integral part of the Hockey Women's World Cup London 2018. She has been part of the India team at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon; Rio Olympics 2016, and the 2018 Asian Games in Women's Hockey.





# Tanuja Bage

Football Player



Born in a poor tribal family, in Debadahi village, Jharsuguda, Tanuja Bage, started playing football in 2003 at the age of 14. She underwent training under some senior football players in Brajrajnagar and after playing for Odisha team for a few years, she secured a place for herself in the Indian team as a goal keeper. For the first time she played at the national level in the year 2005 and later became part of the team in some tournaments.

She played four matches as goalkeeper of the national team till 2011 and also represented the team in multiple international matches. Besides football, Tanuja was also State and national-level rugby player.

Between 2003 and 2011, Tanuja was selected in national football and also rugby teams and she received multiple trophies and certificates during the period. For the villagers, women particularly, Tanuja is a role model and they are proud of her achievements.





## **TREND SETTERS OPTING EMERGING PROFESSION**





## Anupriya Madhumita Lakra

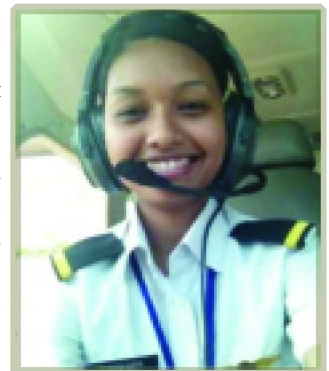
Commercial Pilot



Anupriya Madhumita Lakra, belonging to Oraon tribal community always wanted to become a pilot and gave up engineering midway to pursue her dream. Born in 1992 in Malkangiri district, Anupriya scripted history as the first tribal girl from Odisha to become a commercial pilot. She did her schooling in convent school at Malkangiri district, continued her higher secondary in Semiliguda, Koraput district, moved to Bhubaneswar to study Engineering in 2010 and then joined Aviation Academy in 2012.

It was during her engineering days that Anupriya realized her dream of becoming a pilot. She left engineering midway and took admission at Government Aviation Training Institute (GATI), Bhubaneswar in 2012.

Selected as a co-pilot in a private airline in September 2019, Anupriya Madhumita Lakra, has proven that nothing is impossible if one has the courage, mindset and willingness to achieve one's dreams. Anupriya received the appreciation and accolades from the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha for her extraordinary achievement and is a role model for other girls to emulate.



## Archana Soreng

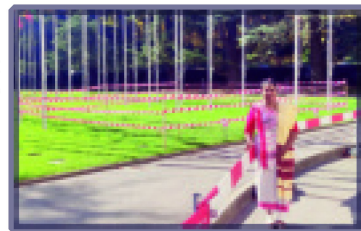
Member of UN Secretary General's  
Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change



Archana Soreng belongs to Khadia Tribe & hails from the Sundergarh district of Odisha. She is a second generation learner in her family and has done Masters in Regulatory Governance from Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai. Working as Research Officer in Vasundhara, Odisha, Soreng is experienced in advocacy and research, and she is working to document, preserve, and promote traditional knowledge and cultural practices of indigenous communities. Her emphasis is on Forest Rights and Governance, Land Rights, Sustainable Livelihood, Natural Resource Governance, Forest Conservation, Women Rights and Climate Justice.

Archana is the only Indian to be selected as one of the seven members of Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2020, as a part of UN Youth Strategy. Soreng believes that the indigenous people have immense contribution in protection and restoration of nature and are real guardians of the forest and warriors of the climate crisis. Now it is up to the youth mass to be the front runners in combating the climate crisis.

She is also the former National Convener of Tribal Commission at Adivasi Yuva Chetna Manch, All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF). She has been engaged with various Youth Groups at Regional, and National levels and is actively involved in the Indigenous Youth Groups to Preserve, Document and Promote the Traditional Knowledge and Practices of their Communities.





## Jayanti Buruda

Journalist



Jayanti Buruda is an inspiration to many young girls from the Koya tribe, as the first female journalist and voice from the tribe to enter the mainstream media. Despite belonging to a community where girls hardly go to school, Jayanti dared to nurture a big dream. Her dream was far beyond being just a graduate and she wanted to become a journalist, a profession that was alien to her family and her community.

Encouraged by her father, Jayanti studied journalism at the Central University of Odisha and later moved to Bhubaneswar for her internship. Jayanti's is the first educated family in the tribe in Malkangiri and her sister is the first graduate of the community. Jayanti currently works with Kalinga TV and reports from Malkangiri, one of the LWE affected areas of Odisha. Jayanti faces several challenges of being the only woman journalist on the field in Malkangiri yet she is determined to pursue her career in journalism. Apart from being a journalist, Jayanti also runs her NGO that focuses on education, especially for girls from her community.



## Lipika Singh Darai

Filmmaker & Director



Lipika Singh Darai, from the HO tribal community of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha has won four National Film Awards in just seven years of her career in filmmaking, an enviable feat for her contemporary filmmakers and directors. Of the four awards she has received since 2010, three are for her directorial venture while fourth is for 'Best Audiography'.

Lipika, who began her educational journey from a Odia primary school in her village to the country's prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune, bagged the Best Director Award in the 64<sup>th</sup> National Film Award in the Best Educational Film category, for her documentary 'The Waterfall'. The Waterfall made in English and Hindi, has been selected for screening in 700 schools across India and other countries.

Her previous films 'Kanke O Saapo', 'A Tree A Man A Sea and Gaarud' had also created waves for wonderfully capturing the essence of rustic life, the treasures of nature, environment protection efforts by local tribals and ethics and values of a society in rural areas.





## Muni Tiga

Locomotive Pilot



Life has been on fast track for Munni Tiga, a tribal girl from Rutkukudi village in Sundargarh district ever since she completed her ITI classes.

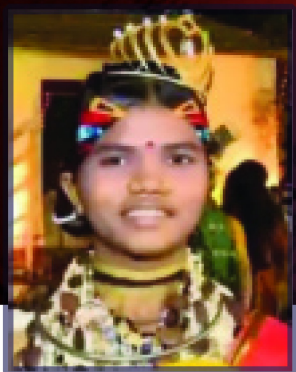
Battling against many setbacks that life threw at her since her childhood, she decided to rise above all hurdles to eventually achieve her dreams of carving an independent life for herself and working as a locopilot, the first from Odisha, in the Indian Railways.

Muni Tiga was born to a family of seven siblings and grew up tending cattle. But her determination to study made her travel around 30 kms from her village to attend high school. She lost her father at a very early age but had the fortitude to battle fate and overcome all adversities. She continued her studies against all odds and joined Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Bargarh despite taunts and chides from villagers. After getting trained in electrical engineering in ITI, she dared to take the uncharted course, becoming a locomotive pilot with Indian Railways. Today she chugs the Shatabdi Express to Palasa and back everyday.



## Pallavi Durua

First 'Tribal Queen'-Winner of Adi Rani Contest



Pallavi Durua, from Koraput district, was crowned as the first Tribal Queen at the Adi Rani Kalinga Tribal Queen competition held at Bhubaneswar in 2018. Panchami Majhi of Titlagarh and Rashmirekha Hansdah of Mayurbhanj were declared as the first and second runners-up of the beauty pageant respectively. The trio will now feature in a short movie on tribal culture, to be produced by a Mumbai-based producer.

The event was first of its kind in the country, an attempt to highlight rich tribal cultures and tradition across the country. Jointly supported by the SC & ST Department and Tourism Department, Government of Odisha the contest saw more than 150 participants from over 25 states of the country. Around 20 contestants were in the final round representing their tribes, wherein the girls dressed up in their traditional attire walked the ramp.

As a trendsetter, Pallavi is an example for tribal girls across the country to shed the superstitions and face the world with confidence.





# Sanjukata Singh

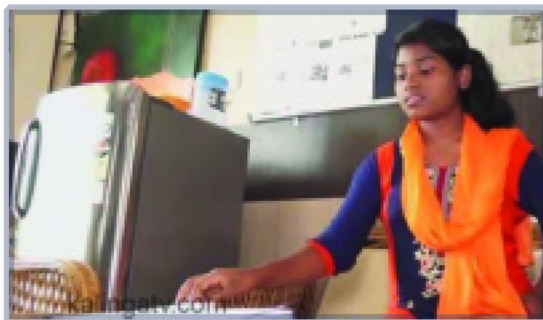
Higher Studies in International University



Sanjukta Singh, a tribal student has been selected in 2019 to study in Weiss High School in Pflugerville, Texas for the next academic session. She was offered a seat after qualifying for Kennedy Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Program hosted by AFS Intercultural Programs. She will get higher education with full scholarship from the US Government.

Sanjukta, who belongs to a poor Bhumija tribal family in Nuapadhi village of Remuna Block, Balasore district, cleared HSC examination in 2019 securing 80% marks. Sanjukta lost her father at an early age and her mother managed the family working as a daily labour. Sanjukta, who joined KISS in 2011 in standard 3 was always focused and determined to achieve big in life.

Sanjukta's success proves that even poor and underprivileged students can travel across the world and pursue their dreams if they get the right opportunity.



# Santwana B Simran

International Beauty Pageant



Santwana B Simran, a tribal girl from Odisha's, Mathalput under Semiliguda block in Koraput, has put the state on global map by winning Miss India International Photogenic title at Miss India International Fusion Fiesta 2019 held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Simran who belongs to Desia tribe, an ethnic indigenous community of Koraput, is the first person from her community to participate in the International Beauty Pageant and win the title.

After her achievement, Santwana now aims to participate in other beauty contests like Femina Miss India, Miss World and Miss Universe contests and is also ready to take up modelling as a career. Susmita Sen and Priyanka Chopra have been an inspiration for this Plus II science student who had earlier won the Miss Koraput title after winning the “Kerry's Mr. & Miss Koraput 2019” contest.

Her determination can be gauged from the fact that she could make it to the Jakarta event despite financial constraints of her family. She was supported by district administration and NALCO, Damanjodi to participate in the contest and the rest is history.









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