



# Birsa Munda

## Why in News?

The [Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla](#) visited the Jail Museum in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on 25th May 2025 and paid tribute to [Bhagwan Birsa Munda](#).

- The visit aimed to honor Munda's contribution to tribal rights and cultural heritage.

## Key Points

- **About: Birsa Munda** was a tribal freedom fighter, religious reformer, and folk hero, who played a key role in tribal resistance against British rule in India.
  - **Early Life:**
    - **Birth:** Born in Ulihatu on **15th November 1875**, now in Jharkhand's Khunti district, to a poor sharecropper (sajhadar) family.
    - **Community:** Belonged to the **Munda tribe**, a major Adivasi community of the [Chotanagpur plateau](#).
    - **Early Name:** Daud Munda, after his father briefly converted to Christianity.
  - **Education and Early Influences:**
    - Attended local schools under the guidance of Jaipal Nag.
    - Studied at a **missionary school** and later at **BEL school in Chaibasa** for four years.
    - Was influenced by **Christianity** but later rejected it due to cultural and religious differences.
    - Influenced by **Vaishnavism** and Anand Panre (a munshi), leading him to form his own spiritual sect.
    - Became known as **Bhagwan (God)** by his followers and founded the **Birsait sect**.
    - He is lovingly called "**Dharti Aaba**" (Father of the Earth) by his followers.
  - **Beliefs and Teachings:**
    - Promoted **monotheism** through the worship of Singhbonga, a tribal deity.
    - He campaigned against **alcoholism, belief in black magic and superstitions, and forced labour (beth begari)**.
    - Encouraged clean living, hygiene, and spiritual unity.
    - Taught pride in tribal culture and community land ownership.
  - **Resistance Against Colonial Injustice:**
    - British land policies destroyed the **Khuntkatti land system**, where land was communally owned.
    - **Zamindars and thikadars (middlemen)** began exploiting tribals, turning many into **bonded labourers**.
    - Birsa educated his people about these injustices and urged them to reclaim their rights.
- **The Ulgulan (Great Rebellion):**
  - **Causes of the Uprising:**
    - **Loss of land, economic hardship, forest alienation, and cultural erosion** pushed Birsa to act.
    - Gave the call for **Ulgulan (rebellion)** and urged tribals to **stop paying rent**.
    - **Slogan of Resistance:** "**Abua raj ete jana, maharani raj tundu jana**" (Let the

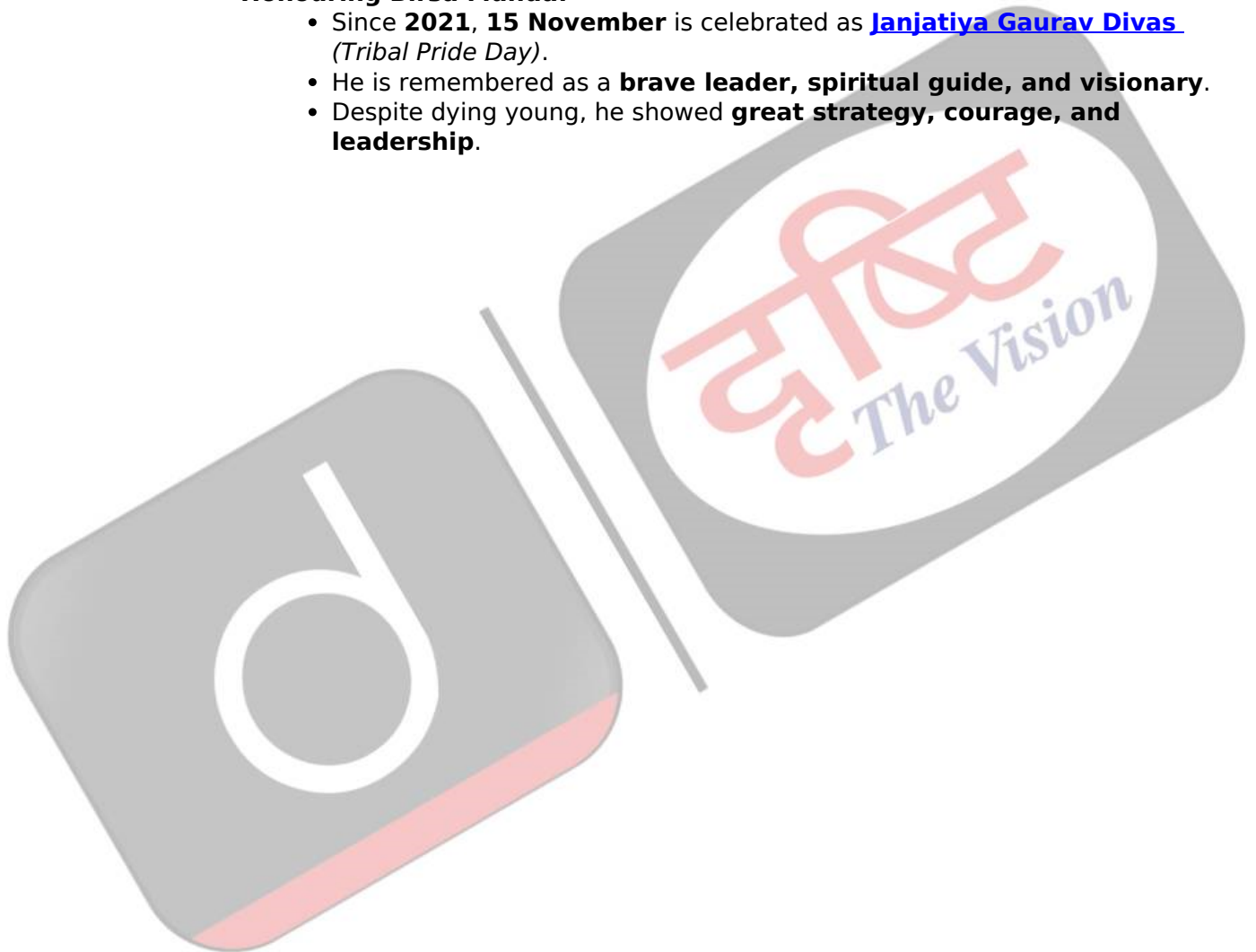
*queen's rule end, and our rule begin).*

- **Course of Revolt:**

- The revolt began in **1895** as a response to land encroachment and forced labour policies imposed by the British Raj.
- In **1895**, Birsa Munda was **arrested on charges of rioting** and **jailed for two years**.
- After his **release in 1897**, he resumed his efforts, moving **village to village** to gather support and promote the vision of a **tribal-led kingdom**.
- **Birsa Munda died of cholera in 1900**, marking the end of the active phase of the revolt.

- **Aftermath and Legacy:**

- In **1908**, the **Chotanagpur Tenancy Act** was passed:
  - Banned land transfers from tribals to non-tribals.
  - Recognized **Khuntkatti rights**.
  - Banned **beth begari** (forced labour).
- **Honouring Birsa Munda:**
  - Since **2021**, **15 November** is celebrated as [Janjatiya Gaurav Divas](#) (*Tribal Pride Day*).
  - He is remembered as a **brave leader, spiritual guide, and visionary**.
  - Despite dying young, he showed **great strategy, courage, and leadership**.





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