

# CHAKALI ILAMMA

## For Her Land and Dignity



**THE STORY SO FAR:** CHAKALI ILAMMA WAS NOT AFRAID OF ANYONE. SHE FOUGHT THE POWERFUL ZAMINDARS FOR HER RIGHTS OVER HER LAND

**BY A. SENGUPTA, S. BANERJEE AND S. MUKHOPADHYAY**



Ilamma was not a violent woman, but she knew that if she kept quiet, there could be more attacks and poor people like her would continue to suffer. She destroyed the *patwari*'s house as a symbol of evil and cultivated corn on that land. Instead of the wicked and the powerful, the cornfield was to be for all, including the poor, lower caste and downtrodden.

Politically aware and active, Ilamma was a member of the Andhra Mahasabha, a people's organization spearheading a movement for the rights of the poor in the state of Hyderabad. This act of making land and crops available for all inspired the Communist Party of India.

This led to a movement in Telangana where riches and crops were taken from landlords and given back to the poor. The violence and selfishness of the upper-caste zamindars and the government was finally defeated through the courage and inclusive-

ness of Ilamma's action.

Ilamma and her comrades also fought for Hyderabad's freedom from the evil clutches of the Nizam's government in 1947. This is known as the Telangana Armed Rebellion. Resisting the armed forces of the landlords and the Nizam, this movement was successful in ending illegal taxes and grain collections and reclaiming land taken away by the zamindars.

Ilamma's fight to cultivate her own land was not just a fight for forty acres, it was a fight for dignity for all lower-caste poor people like her. She also strongly criticised the many ways in which the upper caste tried to humiliate people from the lower castes. She challenged upper-caste women who insisted that lower-caste women call them "Dora", an address meant to establish their authority. She asked how upper-caste women were superior to women like her. Her struggle encouraged many women. She was one of the ear-

liest women to raise her voice against the tyranny of upper-caste zamindars the Nizam and the British government. Instead of mutely accepting the life handed to her, she became a prominent leader of the people and a voice against oppression of any kind. In spite of all her achievements, Chakali Ilamma remains forgotten in history and her contributions are largely ignored. It was only as late as 2018 that the Telangana government installed her statue in Warangal to honour her role in the freedom movement. Women like Chakali Ilamma fought against caste and patriarchy to try to make the world we live in a better, more equal place.

► *The end*  
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BOOKWATCH



● Priya lives in a foreign land. There is an event in school for which she must perform a traditional dance. Priya seeks help from her grandparents in India. They get on a video call to teach her the Kodava dance, a powerful tribal dance dedicated to the Cauvery river goddess. Suddenly, the video connection snaps. Priya must figure out how she can do the jungle dance. This is a picture book with very little text.

**PRIYA THE JUNGLE DANCER**  
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PUBLISHER: ADIDEV PRESS