



## Story of The Great Fish Farmer Women Bilasabai Chhatisgarh

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Around 300 years ago, in the kingdom of Ratanpur, men and women lived harmoniously, engaging in good deeds. Among them was a skilled and hardworking boatman who hunted fish and took care of his family. One day, he visited the banks of the Arpa River with his wife. They held hands and prayed to Baisakha, wishing for a beautiful child. Baisakha blessed them with a daughter, who had a beautiful and gentle appearance, and they named her Bilasa. Her father, Parshu (Rama Kewat), was delighted to see her grow and flourish. Bilasa's childhood was spent playing and learning the art of weaponry. She was as sharp and strong as any man, never shying away from challenges. Courageous and valorous, she was a match for any brave soldier, and people trembled at the sight of her rowing the boat. She excelled in all tasks and adopted war tactics with ease.



Bilasa Bai's heroism did not go unnoticed, one day, while all the village's young men were at the river, only the women remained in the village. Suddenly, a wild boar entered and began to terrorize them. Bilasa, showing great bravery, killed the boar with a spear. Her name quickly spread throughout the village, and she became a local hero. A brave young man named Banshi also lived in the village. Skilled in boating and fishing, he once saved Bilasa from drowning. They soon fell in love and got married. Meanwhile in the sixteenth century, the king of Ratanpur, Raj Ratanpur Dham, was hunting with his army when he became thirsty and approached the Arpa River. Suddenly, a ferocious wolf attacked, injuring many soldiers and causing bloodshed. Bilasa bravely intervened, saving the king's life. Grateful and delighted, the king rewarded her with an estate on the banks of the Arpa. Bilasa and Banshi's bravery and love story spread far and wide, reaching even Emperor Jahangir. The couple was invited to Delhi, where they were honored and recognized for their courage. Bilasa became a symbol of pride for the Kewat community, and the village named after her grew into the city of Bilaspur.

After recovering, the king invited Bilasa and Banshi to his court. Bilasa showcased her archery skills, while Banshi demonstrated his prowess with a spear. The king, pleased with their talents, honored them both and granted Bilasa an estate. When they returned to the village

with the estate, the villagers celebrated them, and Bilasa's respect and influence grew. In Chhattisgarh, she is revered as a goddess, and it is believed that the city of Bilaspur was named in her honor. The people, especially the Kewat community, hold her in high esteem. The Chhattisgarh government even awards the Bilasa Devi Award of one lakh rupees annually for achievements in fisheries. Additionally, Bilaspur Airport is named Bilasa Devi Kewat Airport in her memory.

Mata Bilasa, as she is lovingly called, continues to be honored. A statue of her stands on the banks of the Arpa River. Inspired by her legacy, the state government established the Mrs. Bilasa Bai Kevatin Award in 2006 to promote the development and fisheries of Chhattisgarh fishermen. Her story remains a source of pride and inspiration for the people of Chhattisgarh. Today, Bilasa Bai Kevatin's name is immortalized in Bilaspur. There is a High Court and an airport named after her. Colleges, hospitals, theaters, and parks also bear her name. In the middle of the city, Bilasa Chowk features a life-size statue of her. Since 1933, when Mahatma Gandhi visited Bilaspur, this spot has also been known as Gandhi Chaura.

Year	Name
2014	Shri Prashant Santara
2015	Shri Mustak Khan from Dhamtari
2016	Shri sonendra kumar bhaghel durg
2017	Shri yashwant kumar kenwat raigarh
2019	Shri sudeep das from raipur
2020	Shri Gourav Saluja from Raigarh
2021	Anil kumar Sahu from Durg
2022	Shri rupchand dhiwar durg

Many types of sagas, poems in Chhattisgarhi language and stories regarding Bilasa Bai are still prevalent in the area such as: -

**मरद बरोबर लगय बिलासा, लागय देवी के अवतार  
बघवा असन रेंगना जेखर, सनन सनन चलय तलवार ।**

(Marad barobar lagay bilasa, lagay devi ke avtar  
Baghwa asan rengna, jekhar, sanan sanan chalay talwar

**It means**

Bilasa's energy, fierce like a man,  
Glimpsed, she's a goddess, divine and grand.  
Her stride, the tiger's majestic flow,  
With a sword that her soul does know.

**छितकी कुरिया मुकुत दुआर, भितरी कॅवटिन कसे सिंगार।  
खोपा पारै रिंगी चिंगी, ओकर भीतर सोन के सिंगी।  
मारय पानी बिछलय बाट, ठमकत कॅवटिन चलय बजार।**

आन बइठे छँवा छकार, कँवटिन बइठे बीच बजार।  
सोन के माची रूप के परा, राजा आइस कँवटिन करा।  
मोल बिसाय सब कोइ खाय, फोकटा मछरी कोइ नहीं खाय।  
कहव कँवटिन मछरी के मोल, का कहिहौं मछरी के मोल।

(Chitaki kuriya mukut duaar, bhitari kevatin kase singar  
Khopa pare ringi chingi aokar bhitar son ke singhi  
Maaray pani bichly baat thamkat kevtin chlay baazzar  
Aan baithe chenvaa chkkar, kevtin baithe bich bajar  
Son ke machi, roop ke parra, raja aais kevtin kara  
Mol bisay sab koi khay, fokta machari koi nhi khay  
Kahav kevtin machri ke mol ka kahihon machri ke mol)

### Meaning

In a small home with a beautiful door, A fisherwoman prepped, her beauty galore. With hair styled fine, gold singhi in place, she balanced a bowl with a heroine's grace.

By the road others sat, selling their fare, but in the market's heart, she held her share. Her smoked fish gleamed like gold in the light, on a large plate, they were a delectable sight.

The king approached; to buy from her stand, her fish were the best in all the land. High-quality fish, everyone would eat, for lesser fish could not compete.

The great fisherwoman, known far and wide, Sold her prized fish with pride. Her market, a place of joy and delight, where everyone feasted, from morning till night

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