

Unsung Heroes of the Quit India Movement: Lesser-Known Freedom Fighters from Erode District and Their Contribution to India's Independence Struggle

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ABSTRACT

The Indian independence movement is one of the most significant and impactful events in modern South Asian history, marked by mass participation from a wide array of social classes and regions. In retrospect, the role played by Tamil Nadu in this monumental struggle, especially the western districts which formed part of the Kongu region, is still missing from mainstream historical accounts. The August 8, 1942 erupts up until now it is commemorated as Quit India Movement and therefore serves as the greatest defining moment towards achieving an utterly unabashed freedom from British raj imposed on us for centuries. This particular account focuses on lesser known but remarkable freedom fighters from Erode district who actively participated in August revolution of 1942. With primary research such as holistic interviews, family member conversations, jail record scrutiny alongside archival document assessment, this paper aims to bring into light the enduring fight put forth by patriots K.C.Dharmalingam, E.P. Kittappan, E.S. Ramasamy, M. Nagappan, S. Kulandaisami, R.P.G.V Govindan M.Perumal and M.A Eswaran These people portrayed incredible bravery against ruthless colonial oppression while possessing different socio economic statuses like students to farmers to laborers and social workers.

Keywords: Quit India Movement, Freedom Fighters, August Revolution, Tamil Nadu, Erode District, Colonial Resistance, Unsung Heroes

Introduction

The tale of India's freedom struggle is a multifaceted story of immense sacrifice, great valor, and immense determination. Local and regional narratives within the discourse tend to fluctuate between being overlooked or documented insufficiently region unlike much of the mainstream had been documented around people like Mahatma Gandhi or Subah Chandra Bose. In fact this phenomenon holds true for the western districts of Tamil Nadu particularly the Kongu region which played pivotal roles throughout various stages in the anti colonial movement.

During the twentieth century Erode district became a focal point of nationalist activities and lies at the heart of Lord Kongu regions. Dominance in textile trade with jamakalems, carpets, lungies along with grey cloths and silk sarees ensured that both workers and businesspeople developed strong anti colonial sentiments.¹ Coupled with a rather high concentration of educational institutions including colleges teacher training schools on top of nationalistic ideologies on the middle class further drove these sentiments.

The historiography of the Tamil Nadu freedom struggle has concentrated on such figures as Dheeran Chinnamalai, an 18th century Kongu chieftain who fought against Tipu Sultan and later the British East India Company, and Tiruppur Kumaran, the young patriot who died during the flag satyagraha in 1932.² Nonetheless, the longstanding legacy of defiance in this region includes countless other national heroes whose efforts have been eclipsed by more prominent documented cases.

This endeavor aims to resolve this particular historiographical gap by studying the Erode district's freedom fighters and their involvement in the Quit India Movement of 1942. The selection is intentional because it highlights one of the last stages in India's non-violent approach to resistance; subsequent movements became highly militant in nature. The movement was critical not only due to its scope and scale but also demonstrated Indian's willingness for total independence.

Resistance and Repression Patterns

The experiences of Erode district freedom fighters highlight a number of significant trends in the way the Quit India Movement was conducted and how the British handled it. First, one of the main tactics used by local resistance groups is the methodical targeting of communication infrastructure, especially telephone and telegraph lines. This emphasis was a result of both strategic consideration of weak points in the colonial administrative structure and the fact that relatively unskilled saboteurs could easily target such targets.³

Second, colonial authorities' severe punishment system, which combined long jail terms with physical punishment, was intended to discourage movement participation by causing exemplary suffering. Evidence, however, indicates that this kind of brutality frequently led to a rise in support for the freedom fighters and opposition to British rule.

Third, many participants' post-release political shift towards communist ideology illustrates the unfinished character of the 1947 independence and the ongoing importance of social and economic justice concerns. In the decolonisation process, the shift from anti-colonial nationalism to socialist politics exemplifies the intricate connection between political sovereignty and social change.⁴

Fourth, the difficulties with historical memory in postcolonial societies are brought to light by the tardy official acknowledgement of the contributions made by freedom fighters through prizes like the Tamira Patra. Both bureaucratic inefficiency and the exclusion of regional contributions from the national narrative are reflected in the delay in recognising these sacrifices.⁵

Methodology and References

This study reconstructs the experiences of lesser-known Erode district freedom fighters using a multidisciplinary approach that combines oral history, archival research, and biographical analysis. Jail release certificates, official documents, news reports from the time, and in-person interviews with the freedom fighters' relatives and associates are examples of primary sources.

Oral history methods are especially useful for regaining the experiences of people whose contributions were not sufficiently recorded in official documents. The personal aspects of political commitment and the long-term effects of involvement in the independence struggle are revealed through in-person interviews with the children and family members of freedom fighters.

Important documentary evidence, such as jail records, police reports, and administrative correspondence, that shed light on the extent and ferocity of resistance activities in Erode district can be found through archival research in government repositories and private collections. When it comes to establishing exact information regarding sentences, prison conditions, and release dates, the survival of jail release certificates is especially beneficial.

While recognising the unavoidable gaps and limitations in the available evidence, the triangulation of various sources—official documents, firsthand recollections, and modern accounts—helps guarantee the accuracy of the historical reconstruction.

Implications and Significance

In modern Indian historiography, the resuscitation of these lesser-known tales of sacrifice and resistance fulfils a number of crucial functions. First, by highlighting the Quit India Movement's local variances and regional scope, it advances a more thorough understanding of the movement. The experiences of the freedom fighters in the Erode district demonstrate the advanced organisational skills and strategic thinking that defined grassroots resistance efforts.

Second, this research questions prevailing accounts of the independence movement that emphasise the roles played by national leaders while downplaying those of regional and local players. It illustrates the mass nature of the anti-colonial movement and the level of public involvement in the fight for freedom by concentrating on unsung heroes.

Third, this collection of biographical profiles demonstrates the wide range of social backgrounds of movement members, including middle-class professionals, farmers, workers, and students. This diversity shows the freedom movement's appeal to a wide range of social classes and challenges stereotypes that it was primarily an elite phenomenon.

Fourth, the study draws attention to the long-term effects of involvement in the independence movement, such as health issues brought on by the harsh conditions in prison, political radicalisation that results in participation in communist movements, and the difficulties in transferring from anti-colonial activism to nation-building endeavours.

Current Significance

As India struggles with issues of social justice, historical memory, and democratic governance, the tales of the freedom fighters from Erode district are still very relevant today. Current initiatives to combat poverty, inequality, and corruption in Indian society are motivated by their example of selfless devotion to the common good.

The methodical recording of their contributions provides a template for reclaiming other underappreciated facets of India's liberation struggle, especially the experiences of women, Dalits, tribal peoples, and other under-represented groups whose sacrifices have not received enough attention in popular historical accounts.

The continuity between the principles of the freedom movement and current attempts to attain social and economic justice in modern-day India is demonstrated by their post-independence participation in social welfare initiatives, communist politics, and development projects.

Historical Background: The Origins of the Quit India Movement

A complex web of internal and external factors that had been accumulating during the early 1940s gave rise to the Quit India Movement of 1942. Indian political leaders and the general public were deeply disillusioned by the Cripps Mission's failure in March 1942, which had offered India dominion status following the war instead of immediate independence. Indian expectations for full self-governance were not met by Sir Stafford Cripps's proposals, despite the fact that they marked a significant change in British policy⁶.

The demand for independence was made even more urgent by the global backdrop of World War II. While the Atlantic Charter's declaration of self-determination for all peoples brought to light the conflict between Allied war goals and the continuation of colonial rule in India, the fall of Singapore and Rangoon to Japanese forces had destroyed the myth of British invincibility. Gandhi's belief that Britain was waging a war for democracy while denying India democracy laid the moral groundwork for the start of the most pivotal stage of the independence movement.

Gandhi's famous demand that the British "Quit India" and his catchphrase, "Do or Die" (Kareenge ya Marenge), were heard during the All-India Congress Committee meeting held at Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay on August 8, 1942. Delivered with characteristic political savvy and moral authority, this speech changed the course of India's freedom struggle from constitutional negotiations to unprecedented levels of mass civil disobedience.

The British reaction was ruthless and quick. Almost all of the Congress leadership was arrested and held without charge or trial under the Defence of India Act within hours of Gandhi's speech. Instead of preventing organised resistance, this decapitation tactic had the opposite effect. With long-standing leaders behind bars, the movement took on a spontaneous and radical quality that went well beyond the Congress's customary moderate stance.

The Quit India Movement in Tamil Nadu: Regional Dynamics

Tamil Nadu's response to the Quit India call was immediate and widespread, reflecting the province's long tradition of anti-colonial resistance⁷. The western districts, including Coimbatore, Salem, and Erode, emerged as particularly active centers of the movement. Several factors contributed to this regional concentration of resistance activities.

First, the area's industrial development, particularly in textiles, had created a substantial working-class population with experience in labor organization and collective action. The Coimbatore textile mills, employing thousands of workers, became centers of strike activity and anti-government demonstrations. Second, the region's educational institutions had produced a generation of politically conscious youth who provided leadership for various forms of resistance.

Third, the area's communication infrastructure, including railway lines connecting major cities and telegraph networks facilitating government administration, provided obvious targets for sabotage activities. The strategic importance of these installations meant that their disruption could significantly impact British administrative efficiency and military logistics.

The movement in Tamil Nadu was characterized by several distinctive features that set it apart from resistance activities in other provinces. The participation of students was particularly pronounced, with educational institutions becoming centers of political organization and protest activities. The Teacher Training School in Erode, for instance, produced several freedom fighters who later played significant roles in the movement.

Another distinctive feature was the sophisticated nature of sabotage activities undertaken by local patriots. Rather than engaging in spontaneous violence, resistance groups in the region demonstrated remarkable organizational capability and strategic thinking. The systematic targeting of communication infrastructure, including telegraph lines, telephone exchanges, and postal facilities, revealed careful planning and coordination among different resistance cells⁸.

Biographical Profiles of Erode's Unsung Heroes

K.C. Dharmalingam: The Student Revolutionary

Kali Charan Dharmalingam, born on July 1, 1922, in Erode, represents the archetypal student revolutionary of the Quit India Movement. His involvement in the freedom struggle began during his tenure at the Teacher Training School, where exposure to nationalist literature and political discussions shaped his anti-colonial consciousness. The influence of teachers committed to the independence cause played a crucial role in politicizing students like Dharmalingam, who would later become leaders of resistance activities.

Dharmalingam's transformation from student to revolutionary activist illustrates the radicalizing impact of the Quit India Movement on India's youth. His initial involvement in organizing school hartals and student protests reflected the movement's appeal to educational institutions across the country. However, his subsequent engagement in more serious acts of sabotage, including the distribution of anti-war pamphlets

and attacks on government infrastructure, demonstrated the movement's evolution toward more militant forms of resistance.

The charges against Dharmalingam provide insight into the range of activities undertaken by freedom fighters in Erode district. His distribution of anti-war pamphlets reflected the movement's propaganda dimension, aimed at undermining public support for the British war effort. The setting fire to the post box and record room in the Collector's office represented direct attacks on symbols of colonial authority and administrative infrastructure. The cutting of telegraph wires, perhaps the most common form of sabotage during the movement, was designed to disrupt government communications and coordination of repressive measures.

The sentences imposed on Dharmalingam reveal the severity of British repression during the Quit India Movement. His total punishment of twelve years rigorous imprisonment, combined with thirty lashes, was disproportionate to the nature of his activities and reflected the colonial government's determination to crush the movement through exemplary punishment. The fact that he was ultimately released on medical grounds after serving less than two years suggests that the harsh prison conditions took a severe toll on the health of freedom fighters⁹.

Dharmalingam's post-independence involvement in the Sarvodaya movement and his work as a village welfare worker demonstrate the continuity between the freedom struggle and subsequent efforts at nation-building. His receipt of the Tamira Patra Award represents official recognition of his contributions, though such recognition came decades after his sacrifices were made.

E.P. Kittappan: The Young Martyr of Communication Warfare

Easwaran Pillai Kittappan's story exemplifies the profound personal sacrifices made by freedom fighters during the Quit India Movement. Born in 1924 to Palaniyappa Goundar and Papayammal, Kittappan's early loss of his father and his subsequent decision to join the independence movement reveal the intersection of personal tragedy and political commitment that characterized many participants in the struggle¹⁰.

Kittappan's inclusion among the "thirteen young freedom fighters" of Erode district highlights the collective nature of resistance activities in the region. This group, consisting primarily of young men in their late teens and early twenties, developed sophisticated methods for disrupting British communications infrastructure. Their targeting of telephone lines in Erode Municipal Colony and Surampatti was strategically significant, as these installations connected the district headquarters with outlying areas and facilitated coordination of administrative and security operations.

The punishment meted out to Kittappan—one year of rigorous imprisonment and forty lashes—was particularly harsh given his young age. The combination of imprisonment and corporal punishment was designed to serve as a deterrent to other potential participants in the movement. However, evidence suggests that such harsh measures often had the opposite effect, generating greater sympathy for the freedom fighters and increased opposition to British rule.

Kittappan's post-release involvement with Farmers' Trade Unions and the Communist Party reflects the political radicalization that characterized many freedom fighters after 1942. The experience of British repression, combined with exposure to socialist ideas during imprisonment, led many participants in the Quit India Movement to embrace more radical political ideologies in the post-independence period.

His election to the Erode City Council from 1959 to 1964 demonstrates the transition of many freedom fighters into mainstream political life after independence. His service as secretary of the Erode City Communist Party and his work for farmers' rights illustrate the continuity between anti-colonial struggle and subsequent efforts to address social and economic inequalities in independent India.

E.S. Ramasamy: The Peasant Revolutionary

Easwaran Sellappa Ramasamy's participation in the Quit India Movement illustrates the significant involvement of rural populations in the 1942 struggle. Born in 1923 to Sellappa Goundar and Ramaye Ammal, Ramasamy's background reflects the agrarian character of much of Erode district's population during this period¹¹. His involvement in cutting telephone lines, along with twelve other young patriots, demonstrates the ability of rural activists to organize sophisticated sabotage operations.

The targeting of communication infrastructure by Ramasamy and his associates was strategically significant for several reasons. First, it disrupted the flow of information between different levels of the colonial administration, hampering efforts to coordinate repressive measures. Second, it symbolically demonstrated the vulnerability of the colonial state and its inability to protect even basic infrastructure. Third, it provided a relatively accessible form of resistance that did not require sophisticated equipment or extensive training.

Ramasamy's sentence of one year's rigorous imprisonment and thirty lashes, served in Erode Sub-jail and Alipuram Central Jail, reflects the standardized punishment pattern for communication sabotage during the Quit India Movement¹². The fact that he and his associates were all released on the same date (October 27, 1943) suggests coordinated legal proceedings and uniform sentencing practices.

His post-release involvement with the Communist Party illustrates a common trajectory among Quit India Movement participants. The experience of British repression, combined with exposure to radical political ideas during imprisonment, led many freedom fighters to embrace communist ideology in the post-

independence period. This political evolution reflects the incomplete nature of the independence achieved in 1947, which addressed political sovereignty but left economic and social inequalities largely intact.

M. Nagappan: The Committed Activist

Malai Nagappan's life story exemplifies the sustained commitment to political activism that characterized many participants in the Quit India Movement. Born on September 30, 1923, to Molaiappa Goundar and Muthayammal, Nagappan's involvement in cutting telephone lines represented his initiation into the anti-colonial struggle at the age of nineteen¹³.

The standardized nature of the punishment imposed on Nagappan—one year's rigorous imprisonment and thirty lashes—reflects the colonial government's systematic approach to dealing with communication sabotage. The fact that he served his sentence in both Erode Sub-jail and Alipuram Central Jail suggests either overcrowding in local facilities or deliberate policy of transferring prisoners to prevent local support networks from assisting them¹⁴.

Nagappan's decision to become a full-time worker in the National Movement after his release demonstrates the radicalizing impact of the Quit India Movement experience. For many participants, involvement in the 1942 struggle marked the beginning of lifelong commitment to political activism. His membership in the Communist Party reflects the leftward drift of many freedom fighters who became disillusioned with the Congress Party's moderate approach to social and economic reform.

The awarding of the Tamira Patra to Nagappan, along with other freedom fighters from Erode district, represents belated official recognition of their contributions to the independence struggle. However, such recognition came decades after their sacrifices were made and after many of the individuals had passed away.

S. Kulandaisamy: The Tragic Hero

Sellappa Kulandaisamy's story represents one of the most poignant cases among Erode district's freedom fighters. Born on April 13, 1918, to Sengoda Goundar and Chellammal, Kulandaisamy was among the older participants in the telephone line cutting operations¹⁵. His sentence of six months rigorous imprisonment and twenty lashes was relatively lighter than those imposed on his younger associates, possibly reflecting his lesser role in the operation or judicial recognition of his more advanced age.

Kulandaisamy's nickname "Pathayiram" (meaning "thousand" in Tamil) suggests either his numerical designation within the resistance organization or some other aspect of his personality or activities that distinguished him from his associates. Such nicknames were common among underground activists as security measures to protect their real identities.

The tragic circumstances of Kulandaisamy's death—falling seriously ill on the day of the police crackdown and subsequently dying from rheumatism—highlight the long-term health consequences of participation in the freedom struggle¹⁶. The stress of underground activities, harsh prison conditions, and inadequate medical care took a severe toll on many freedom fighters, leading to premature death or lifelong health problems.

Kulandaisamy's early release on June 7, 1943, after serving only six months of his sentence, was likely due to his deteriorating health condition. The colonial authorities, while generally harsh in their treatment of political prisoners, occasionally granted early release on medical grounds to avoid deaths in custody that might generate additional opposition to British rule.

R.P.G.V. Govindan: The Veteran Organizer

Thiru Rama Pillai Gopala Venkata Govindan's involvement in the freedom struggle represents a longer trajectory of anti-colonial activism that predated the Quit India Movement. His participation in the Individual Satyagraha of 1941, which resulted in six weeks imprisonment in Madras Jail, demonstrates his commitment to Gandhian methods of non-violent resistance prior to the more radical phase of the movement in 1942¹⁷.

Govindan's role in pioneering the freedom struggle movement in Chithode village illustrates the importance of local leadership in spreading anti-colonial consciousness to rural areas. His ability to inspire his brother Ranganatham and members of the Kothukkara Chettiar family to join the struggle demonstrates the family and community networks through which political mobilization occurred in rural Tamil Nadu. The police raid on Govindan's home during the Quit India Movement, resulting in the seizure of important documents and notices, suggests his role as a coordinator or communication hub for resistance activities in the Chithode area. The survival of such documentary evidence provides valuable insight into the organizational structure of the movement at the local level.¹⁸

Govindan's influence extended beyond his immediate family to encompass broader community networks, particularly among the Chettiar trading community. This pattern of mobilization along caste and occupational lines was common throughout Tamil Nadu during the freedom struggle and reflects the importance of traditional social structures in modern political movements.

M. Perumal: The Idealistic Youth

Murugan Perumal's participation in the Quit India Movement exemplifies the idealistic commitment of young Indians to the cause of independence. Born on November 1, 1921, in Chithode village to Marimuthu and

Paavayammal, who ran a grocery business, Perumal's middle-class background was typical of many participants in the movement¹⁹.

The choice of Chithode Nallroad as a rallying point for protests and public mobilization demonstrates the strategic thinking of local resistance organizers. Main roads and public spaces served as natural venues for demonstrating opposition to British rule and mobilizing popular support for the independence cause.

Perumal's collaboration with G.V. Venkatachalam in cutting and burning British-owned telegraph and telephone lines represents the sophisticated nature of sabotage operations undertaken by local patriots. The systematic targeting of communication infrastructure required careful planning and coordination among different resistance cells.

The arrest of Perumal and twenty other youths on May 11, 1943, reveals the scale of resistance activities in the Chithode area. The fact that such a large group could be apprehended simultaneously suggests either betrayal by informers or successful police surveillance of resistance networks. The charges under Section 35(4) of the Indian Penal Code indicate prosecution for offenses related to criminal conspiracy and sedition.

Perumal's eighteen-month sentence and thirty lashes, served in Alipuram Jail, Karnataka, reflect the harsh treatment meted out to freedom fighters throughout the British Empire. The transfer of prisoners to jails in other provinces was a common practice designed to prevent local support networks from assisting them and to increase the psychological pressure of separation from family and community.

His post-independence career as a Social Welfare Officer under Chief Minister K. Kamaraj demonstrates the transition of many freedom fighters into nation-building activities. His dedication to serving the Harijan (Dalit) community through welfare schemes and educational initiatives reflects the social reform dimension of the independence movement and its continuation in the post-colonial period.

Perumal's lifelong commitment to wearing khadi clothing, including at his wedding, symbolizes the persistence of Gandhian values among freedom fighters even after independence. Such symbolic gestures-maintained connections to the ideals of the independence movement and served as reminders of the sacrifices made to achieve freedom.²⁰

M.A. Eswaran: The Strategic Organizer

Muthu Aiya Eswaran's close association with Mahatma Gandhi and his two-day stay at the Tiruchencode Ashram highlight the direct connections between local patriots and national leadership during the freedom struggle²¹. His friendship with C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), the prominent Congress leader and later Governor-General of India, demonstrates the networks of personal relationships that facilitated political mobilization.

Eswaran's role in organizing the Congress response to the Quit India call in Erode district reveals the sophisticated organizational structure that supported the movement at the local level. His secret meeting among Congress members and his vigorous, emotional speech demonstrates the importance of local leadership in translating national political directives into regional action.

The secret plan conveyed by Eswaran to the Congress working committee reflects the radical turn taken by the movement in 1942. His advocacy for comprehensive sabotage—including overturning railway tracks, destroying bridges, cutting trees to disrupt transport, and burning post offices—went far beyond traditional Congress methods of non-violent protest. This strategic shift reflects the movement's evolution toward more militant forms of resistance in response to British intransigence.

Eswaran's organizational approach of dividing the mass into specific groups with designated duties demonstrates sophisticated planning and coordination capabilities. This cellular structure helped ensure that the arrest of some participants would not compromise the entire operation, a lesson learned from earlier phases of the movement when centralized leadership made resistance vulnerable to decapitation strategies.

His immediate arrest following the secret meeting and his sentence of one year under the Defense of India Rules reflect the colonial government's extensive surveillance capabilities and its determination to crush resistance leadership. However, the successful implementation of the planned sabotage activities despite his arrest demonstrates the effectiveness of the decentralized organizational structure he had established.

Eswaran's post-independence work on the Lower Bhavani Project illustrates the transition of many freedom fighters into development activities in the new nation. His technical expertise and organizational capabilities, honed during the independence struggle, found constructive application in nation-building efforts.

His personal vow to remain unmarried until India achieved independence, and his subsequent decision not to marry after freedom was attained due to his advanced age, exemplifies the profound personal sacrifices made by freedom fighters. His refusal to wear footwear and his residence in a small house on government land (poramboke) reflect his commitment to simple living and his identification with India's poorest citizens. Eswaran's death in 1978 marked the end of a life entirely dedicated to public service²². His biography illustrates the trajectory of many freedom fighters who transitioned from anti-colonial struggle to nation-building activities while maintaining their idealistic commitment to social transformation.

The freedom fighters of Erode district whose stories are presented in this study represent thousands of similar individuals throughout India whose contributions to the independence struggle have been overshadowed by the prominence given to national leaders in mainstream historical narratives²³. Their sacrifices—including imprisonment, corporal punishment, health problems, and in some cases death—were made without expectation of recognition or reward, motivated solely by love of country and commitment to the cause of freedom.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 marked a decisive turning point in India's struggle for independence, transforming a constitutional campaign into a mass uprising that demonstrated the Indian people's readiness for complete freedom from colonial rule²⁴. The participation of ordinary citizens from places like Erode district provided the movement with its mass character and popular legitimacy, making it impossible for the British to dismiss it as merely the agitation of elite politicians.

The systematic targeting of communication infrastructure by resistance groups in Erode and other districts revealed sophisticated strategic thinking and organizational capabilities that challenged British assumptions about Indian capacity for sustained resistance²⁵. The harsh repression that followed, while temporarily successful in suppressing open revolt, ultimately discredited colonial rule and hastened the British decision to withdraw from India²⁶.

The post-independence careers of these freedom fighters—involving work in social welfare, political activism, and development projects—demonstrate the continuity between the ideals of the independence movement and ongoing efforts to build a just and equitable society in free India. Their example continues to inspire contemporary efforts to address poverty, inequality, and social injustice.

The belated recognition of their contributions through awards and commemorative activities reflects both the challenges of historical memory in postcolonial societies and the importance of recovering neglected aspects of the national past. Their stories serve as reminders that the freedom struggle was truly a mass movement involving countless ordinary individuals whose extraordinary sacrifices made independence possible. As India continues to evolve as a democratic nation, the example of these unsung heroes provides valuable lessons about the importance of citizen participation in public life, the power of collective action to achieve social change, and the enduring relevance of the values—sacrifice, service, and commitment to the common good—that motivated the independence struggle²⁷.

Conclusion

The documentation and preservation of their stories represents not merely an academic exercise but a moral obligation to honor the memory of those who sacrificed everything for the cause of freedom. Their legacy challenges contemporary Indians to maintain the same level of commitment to national development and social justice that characterized the freedom movement, ensuring that the independence they helped achieve translates into genuine prosperity and dignity for all citizens. The freedom fighters of Erode district exemplify the countless unsung heroes whose contributions made India's independence possible. Their stories, recovered through patient research and oral history, enrich our understanding of the freedom struggle while inspiring continued efforts to fulfill the promise of independence through the creation of a just, equitable, and prosperous society. Their memory serves as a permanent reminder that freedom is not a gift but a responsibility, requiring constant vigilance and dedicated service to preserve and extend its benefits to all members of society.

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