

# Life of Freedom Fighters &

SIGNIFICANCE OF TOWNS/VILLAGES IN

## India's Freedom Struggle

People are born free but it is not until they grow up that they realize the restrictions placed upon them, even as children. I believe there came a moment in every Freedom Fighter's life when they were confronted by the stark reality of the situation of their country. There comes that life-changing epiphany when they decide this is not what they want their lives and country to be. That's when they choose to resist the ruthless restrictions and constricting orders imposed upon them.

My heart thumps hard in my chest with unbearable pain when I think about what happened in Jallianwala Bagh slightly more than 100 years ago, when innocent people who had done no great crime other than deciding to stand by their nation, were brutally massacred by the British Army. Some of these incidents make their way to our history textbooks, some martyrs are honoured for their sacrifice but it does not end there.

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Patriotism does not begin and end with a freedom fighter or a martyr. It begins in the very place that made their blood boil. They weren't driven by the fear of being captured or getting prosecuted. Instead, everything they worked for was for the liberation of their country. Little do we know about the eerily similar incident that happened on the south side, barely 1 year after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. The Perungamanallur massacre of 1920 is often referred to as the "Jallianwala Bagh of the South".

There are few of us who haven't heard of Rani Lakshmi Bai who bravely fought for her kingdom when the war broke out and Jhansi became the centre of the rebellion in central India. How many of us value the contributions from Southern India or are even aware of it? Rani Velu Nachiyar was the first queen to fight against the British Colonial power in India. When her husband, the King of Sivaganga was killed in a battle ~~with~~ against East India Company soldiers, she took her daughter and fled the battlefield. She waged a suicide attack with EIC's own ammunition and reclaimed her kingdom, ruling it for a decade.

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These places are now celebrated as the origin of these movements that gave us the freedom we have now. Countless people have marched through these very roads, keeping true to the ideals they held in their hearts. Everything we do today must reflect that; we should be moving towards the future with bold, fearless strides while also honouring the ones in the past that got us here. The regional struggle that flared up across the country in the course of the freedom fight is often not recognized. These unsung heroes, who spearheaded the freedom struggle deserve an equal amount of respect as their national counterparts.

When history ignores regional warriors, freedom fighters, or activists, they become relegated to myth and hyperbole. Is it fair that these valiant warriors' stories be forgotten or worse yet, replaced by a narrative that claims superiority? We must never be divided and a big part of that is recognizing and fixing how we learn about India's freedom struggle. Let us now do better, to remember with pride and respect not only those who fought for our freedom with incomparable valour but also where they came from.

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