



“Forgotten Participants in the Freedom Struggle: The Contribution of the Madiga Community in the Chitradurga–Davangere Region of Karnataka”

Dr. Rajakumar KRJ, Associate Professor, HPPC GFGC, Challakere, Karnataka State- 577522

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Abstract

The history of India's freedom struggle has traditionally been narrated through prominent national leaders, major political organisations and well-documented mass movements. Such an approach, while significant, can obscure the participation of socially and economically marginalised communities whose contributions were often local, informal and inadequately documented. This article examines the participation of members of the Madiga community in the freedom movement in the Chitradurga–Davangere region of Karnataka. Drawing primarily upon locally documented accounts and field-based information, the study identifies individuals who participated in Forest Satyagraha, the Quit India Movement, Congress campaigns, public mobilisation, processions and other forms of resistance. The experiences of A.K. Yarappa, T. Marappa, Congress Rangappa, Hanumanthappa, A.K. Thimmappa, Shivalli Siddappa, B. Shyamappa, Mannappa and others, Dodda Siddavanahalli Aatada Pennayya, and M. Kenchappa illustrate the diverse forms of participation undertaken by members of the community. The study argues that their contribution should not be assessed only through conventional measures such as leadership positions or imprisonment. Mobilisation, communication, cultural participation, logistical support and collective action were also important

components of the movement. The article further highlights the problem of historical invisibility arising from inadequate documentary evidence, particularly in relation to recognition and freedom-fighter pensions. By bringing these local experiences into the broader history of India's freedom movement, the study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of anti-colonial resistance in Karnataka.

Keywords: Freedom Movement, Madiga Community, Karnataka, Chitradurga, Davangere, Forest Satyagraha, Quit India Movement, Dalit History, Subaltern History, Social Participation

1. Introduction

The history of modern India has been shaped by a series of political and social struggles directed towards freedom, responsible government, linguistic reorganisation and social justice. The Indian freedom movement sought liberation from colonial rule, while movements in princely states demanded representative and responsible government. The unification movement subsequently sought the integration of Kannada-speaking regions. Alongside these political developments, movements for social equality challenged longstanding forms of caste-based exclusion and discrimination.

Within this broad historical framework, the participation of marginalised communities deserves particular attention. Conventional accounts of the freedom movement frequently emphasise nationally recognised leaders and major political events. However, the movement was also sustained by thousands of ordinary people whose participation occurred at the



village and district levels. Their contribution included attending political meetings, mobilising local communities, participating in Satyagraha, spreading political messages, joining processions, assisting activists and facing arrest and imprisonment.

The participation of the Madiga community in the freedom movement of Karnataka represents an important but relatively under-explored dimension of this history. The available local accounts indicate that members of the community participated in different phases and forms of the movement in parts of present-day Chitradurga and Davangere districts. Their involvement was not confined to one particular form of protest. Individuals participated in Forest Satyagraha, Quit India activities, Congress mobilisation, public meetings, flag-hoisting programmes, railway-related protests and other forms of local resistance.

The significance of studying these participants extends beyond documenting individual biographies. Their experiences help reveal how a nationally organised movement was transmitted into rural and socially stratified communities. They also demonstrate that participation in the freedom struggle was shaped by social position, economic circumstances, fear of state repression and access to political networks.

The present study therefore seeks to recover and analyse the contribution of members of the Madiga community to the freedom movement in the Chitradurga–Davangere region. It particularly focuses on the nature of their participation, the factors that encouraged or constrained their involvement, and the problem of historical recognition.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the participation of members of the Madiga community in the freedom movement in the Chitradurga–Davangere region.
2. To document the contribution of selected individuals who participated in different phases of the movement.
3. To analyse the different forms of participation, including Satyagraha, mobilisation, political campaigning and civil resistance.

3. Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

- What forms of participation did members of the Madiga community undertake during the freedom movement?
- How did local political and social networks facilitate their participation?
- What role did Satyagraha camps and Congress activities play in mobilising marginalised communities?
- What social and psychological factors limited wider participation?
- To what extent have the contributions of these participants been historically documented and recognised?

4. Methodology

The study adopts a **qualitative and historical approach**. It is based primarily on locally available accounts concerning participants from the Madiga community in the Chitradurga–Davangere region. The material includes biographical accounts, family information, descriptions of participation in political activities, accounts of arrests and imprisonment, and information concerning freedom-fighter recognition and pensions.



The study uses a descriptive and interpretive method. Individual cases are treated as historical narratives that provide insight into broader patterns of participation. Rather than attempting to quantify the entire contribution of the community, the study identifies representative cases through which the nature of participation can be examined.

A limitation of the present study is that the available material does not constitute a complete archival record of all Madiga participants. Indeed, the source itself indicates that several participants may not have received official recognition because documentary evidence was unavailable. Therefore, the findings should be regarded as an initial reconstruction rather than an exhaustive enumeration of all participants.

For publication in a reputed historical or social-science journal, the study should subsequently be supplemented with archival records, government freedom-fighter registers, prison records, contemporary newspapers, Congress records, oral-history interviews and other primary sources.

5. Historical Context: Freedom Movement and Social Participation in Karnataka

The Indian freedom movement gradually developed from regionally dispersed resistance into a broad-based mass movement. In Karnataka, political mobilisation occurred within a complex social environment that included British-administered territories as well as princely states. The demand for responsible government therefore existed alongside the larger anti-colonial movement.

The expansion of political mobilisation created opportunities for communities that had previously remained at the margins of formal political activity. Satyagraha camps were particularly important in this regard. According to the source material, such camps served as centres for preparing participants, communicating political programmes and encouraging people to join the movement. Local camps were reported in areas including Kasturirangappanahalli, Maradihalli, Gorladaku in Hiriur taluk and Madakaripura in Chitradurga taluk.

The growth of political mobilisation gradually brought different sections of society into the movement. The source indicates that by the 1940s participation extended to lower social groups, lower castes, women, rural cultivators and workers. Members of the Madiga community were among those who participated in these activities.

This development is significant because political participation cannot be understood independently of the social structure within which it occurred. For historically disadvantaged communities, participation in an anti-colonial movement could involve not only opposition to colonial authority but also negotiation with local social hierarchies and the fear of repression.

6. Forms of Participation

The evidence indicates that members of the Madiga community participated in the freedom movement in several different ways. These can broadly be classified into five categories:

6.1 Satyagraha and Direct Protest

Forest Satyagraha provided an important avenue for direct participation. Individuals from the community joined local groups undertaking Satyagraha and were subsequently arrested and prosecuted.

A.K. Yarappa of Turuvanur, for example, participated in activities associated with the Forest Satyagraha and was arrested while attempting to participate in a flag-hoisting programme in Chitradurga. He and two others were taken into custody and subsequently sent to Bangalore jail.

Similarly, Hanumanthappa of Doddanall village participated in Forest Satyagraha and was among a group arrested by the police. He was subsequently tried and imprisoned.



These accounts demonstrate that participation was not merely symbolic. In several cases, individuals faced arrest, prosecution and imprisonment.

6.2 Participation in the Quit India Movement

The Quit India Movement created another important context for participation. T. Marappa participated in activities associated with the movement in the Davangere area and was subsequently arrested and sentenced to imprisonment.

Congress Rangappa of Chikkajajur also participated in Quit India activities. The account describes his participation in processions, flag-hoisting and other acts of resistance, followed by arrest and trial.

The experiences of these individuals suggest that the Quit India Movement was capable of extending political mobilisation into smaller settlements and rural communities.

6.3 Political Mobilisation and Communication

Participation did not always involve direct confrontation with colonial authorities. Communication and mobilisation were also essential to the success of local political campaigns.

B. Shyamappa, who participated as a student, was involved in informing people about the arrival of Congress leaders and gathering people for political programmes. His role illustrates the importance of communication networks in extending political mobilisation beyond established political centres.

Shivalli Siddappa similarly participated in public programmes, political campaigns and mobilisation activities. His participation included singing motivational songs, assisting political meetings and helping communicate political messages.

Such activities are important because conventional narratives of political resistance may overlook forms of contribution that did not necessarily result in arrest or imprisonment.

6.4 Cultural and Collective Participation

The case of Mannappa and other participants from Maradihalli illustrates another dimension of participation. Members of the community supported Satyagraha activities through music and processions. Their role was initially different from that of those directly engaged in protest, but during the Quit India period some of these participants were also arrested.

This suggests that political participation operated through a range of social and cultural practices. Music, processions, public gatherings and collective activities could contribute to political mobilisation and community solidarity.

6.5 Participation Beyond the Immediate Region

The evidence also indicates that some participants travelled beyond their home villages or districts to participate in political activities. M. Kenchappa of Hariyabbhe village, for instance, became involved in the freedom movement while studying outside his home area. His account describes participation in meetings and acts of resistance, followed by arrest and imprisonment.

This indicates that political participation was not necessarily restricted to the immediate locality. Personal networks, educational contacts and political associations could connect rural participants with wider movements.



7. Profiles of Selected Participants

7.1 A.K. Yarappa

A.K. Yarappa of Turuvanur represents the experience of a young participant drawn into the movement through local political mobilisation. His participation was associated with the Forest Satyagraha and a flag-hoisting programme in Chitradurga. His arrest and imprisonment demonstrate the personal risks involved in participation. His account also provides an important explanation for the relatively limited participation of some members of the community: fear of repression.

7.2 T. Marappa

T. Marappa of Kurubara Hatti participated in the Forest Satyagraha and subsequently in Quit India-related activities. His arrest and imprisonment illustrate the continuity between local protest and broader anti-colonial mobilisation.

7.3 Congress Rangappa

Congress Rangappa of Chikkajajur was associated with Congress activities and participated in the Quit India Movement. His case demonstrates the importance of local political networks in bringing members of marginalised communities into organised political activity.

7.4 Hanumanthappa

Hanumanthappa of Doddanal participated in Forest Satyagraha and faced arrest and imprisonment. His account further points towards participation by other members of the community, suggesting that individual involvement was part of a wider pattern of community participation.

7.5 A.K. Thimmappa

A.K. Thimmappa of Rangapur participated in the freedom struggle and, according to family information, spent more than a year in prison. The continued preservation of a government-issued medal within his family is presented in the source as evidence of his participation.

7.6 Shivalli Siddappa

Shivalli Siddappa's participation illustrates the importance of mobilisation and cultural activity. He participated in public programmes, assisted political campaigns and helped communicate messages to local populations. His experience demonstrates that political activism extended beyond conventional forms of protest.

7.7 B. Shyamappa

B. Shyamappa participated as a student and served as an important link between political leaders and local communities. His role included communicating information and gathering people for political programmes. His subsequent arrest during Quit India-related activities demonstrates the risks associated with youth participation.

7.8 Mannappa and Other Participants

Mannappa and other members of the Maradihalli community participated collectively in the freedom movement. Their involvement in musical processions and support for Satyagraha illustrates the collective character of local mobilisation. Some were later arrested during Quit India activities.



7.9 Dodda Siddavanahalli Aatada Pennayya

Dodda Siddavanahalli Aatada Pennayya of Chitradurga taluk participated in Congress-related activities and attended the Belgaum Congress session of 1924. The source also records his encounters with Gandhi and subsequent arrests during the freedom movement.

7.10 M. Kenchappa

M. Kenchappa of Hariyabbhe village was influenced by the ideas of Gandhi and Nehru and became involved in freedom movement activities while studying outside his home village. His participation included meetings and acts of resistance, followed by arrest and imprisonment. His account also identifies other members of the community who participated alongside him.

8. Conclusion

The history of India's freedom struggle cannot be fully understood without recognising the contribution of ordinary participants from socially marginalised communities. The evidence examined in this study demonstrates that members of the Madiga community in the Chitradurga–Davangere region participated in a variety of political activities, including Forest Satyagraha, Quit India activities, Congress mobilisation, public campaigns, processions and other forms of resistance.

The experiences of A.K. Yarappa, T. Marappa, Congress Rangappa, Hanumanthappa, A.K. Thimmappa, Shivalli Siddappa, B. Shyamappa, Mannappa and others, Dodda Siddavanahalli Aatada Pennayya, and M. Kenchappa illustrate different dimensions of this participation. Their contribution ranged from direct confrontation with colonial authority to less visible but essential forms of mobilisation and communication.

The study also highlights the importance of examining fear, social disadvantage and documentary exclusion when reconstructing the political participation of marginalised communities. The absence of official documentation should not automatically be equated with the absence of historical participation.

The contribution of the Madiga community therefore deserves greater attention within regional histories of Karnataka and within the broader historiography of India's freedom movement. Further research using archival documents, prison records, government registers, contemporary newspapers, oral histories, family collections and local institutional records could identify additional participants and establish a more comprehensive account of their contribution.

The recovery and preservation of these histories is not merely an exercise in adding names to an existing narrative. It represents an opportunity to rethink the freedom movement as a genuinely broad-based historical process in which ordinary people, including members of socially marginalised communities, played meaningful and sometimes decisive local roles.

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